

Earl of Essex Bearded Iris



Tall Bearded Iris are the giants of the late spring border, available in a rainbow of colours that blend to suit every colour scheme. Plants form a clump of green sword-shaped leaves, bearing upright stems with very large blooms. This selection has ruffled white blooms with violet-blue edges and streaks.



Iris 'Earl of Essex'

- **Use:** This rebloomer is an example of a plicata Iris, or an Iris with stitched, stippled, or banded colors that contrast with the base color, usually yellow or white. In this instance, 'Earl of Essex' has a white base color, with orchid violet veining and stippling on the edges. Pale orange beards are infused with pale violet.
- **Exposure/Soil:** Will produce the most flowers if they receive a full day of sun, but will also perform reasonably well with a half day of sun. The most critical growing factor is the moisture level of the soil and drainage. They will absolutely not tolerate "wet feet" (too much water will cause the rhizomes to rot) and require very well-drained soil at all times of the year. They will grow in any good garden soil as long as this drainage is provided. Generally heavy feeders and should be fertilized 3 times per year: first in the spring when new growth appears, second right after blooming, and third in the fall. When planting them for the first time or when transplanting, use a no-nitrogen fertilizer such as 0-10-10 worked into the soil.
- **Growth:** Grows 34-40" tall. Division is recommended every 3-4 years to maintain healthy plants and achieve the maximum bloom. The best time of year to plant irises is in late summer after they are done blooming. Dig up the entire clump and use a sharp knife to cut apart the rhizomes. Keep only the newer ones around the outer edge of the clump and discard the old, woody center. Replant the new divisions 12-18 in. apart to allow ample room for new growth and good air circulation. Planting at the correct level is critical to the plant's health and flower production. Rhizomes should be planted so the soil barely covers the top of them, or 1-2 in. deep. Doing so will help to prevent soft rot.
- **Hardiness:** Zone 3-10; Perennial
- **Foliage:** Deciduous. Green, sword-shaped leaves.
- **Flower:** A classic plicata, its clean white petals are heavily veined and stippled with wisteria violet markings with a gentle ruffling and fluting of the softly color petals. Blooms in late spring and a reliable late summer-fall rebloomer.