

Insert as Listing In The Bulb, Corm, Tuber, Rhizome Section:

Dietes iridooides (L.) F.W. Klatt

White Butterfly Iris

(*Dietes catenulata*, *Dietes vegeta*, *Moraea catenulata*,
Moraea iridooides, *Moraea vegeta*)

- C This member of the Iridaceae is also known as African Iris or Fortnight Iris; this species forms a dense evergreen to semi-evergreen, 1½ to 2½ tall, tuft of fan-like sprays composed of nearly linear sword-like leaves; these leaves arise from shallow fleshy rhizomes; plants are very reminiscent of the genus *Iris* in both form and flower.
- C The perfect flowers are held above the foliage on sparsely branched few-flowered leafless stalks; individual flowers are superficially reminiscent of *Iris spp.* with erect petaloid pistils and recurved tepals; the six recurved tepals are white with an indistinct greenish stripe on the back and yellow or brown spots on the interior; the erect petaloid pistils are hooded with two acute lobes pointing upward, reminiscent of bat ears; these pistils are bluish to purplish in color; people have likened the flowers to butterflies, although this description might be more apropos on *D. bicolor*; blooms open in late spring and sporadically into summer; individual flowers are about 2 to 2½ (4) across and ephemeral; flower numbers are not high in relation to foliage mass as compared to some *Iris spp.*, but the flowering season is longer.
- C Culture of *D. iridooides* is simple; provide a moderately well drained soil in a sunny to partly shaded location; plants are very heat tolerant and will survive moderate drought; the foliage and roots can tolerate modest salt exposure; although deadheading is not necessary, it may prolong bloom and removal of spent flower stalks may improve tidiness, as will periodic removal of damaged leaves; few pest or disease problems have been reported; this species is well adapted to low relative humidity environments; excess irrigation may decrease flowering; plants are evergreen in USDA zones 9 through 11, sometimes becoming semi-evergreen in zone 8b.
- C White Butterfly Iris can be used in perennial borders or mixed plantings, but will also work as a short informal hedge if planted on tight spacings; although effective as an individual specimen, plants are often placed in groups for a massed display.
- C *Dietes bicolor* (E.G. von Steudel) F.W. Klatt (*Iris bicolor*, *Moraea bicolor*), variously known as Yellow Butterfly Iris, Fortnight Iris, Spanish Iris or Wild Iris, is very similar to *D. iridooides*, but *D. bicolor* is slightly larger, 2 to 3 tall, and has a pale yellow flower about 2 across with dark brown basal spots on the six recurved tepals; the flower of *D. bicolor* is more horizontally flattened than on *D. iridooides*; this species is from South Africa and has similar cultural requirements to *D. iridooides*, but *D. bicolor* tends to bloom more freely in moist environments than *D. iridooides*; this species is effective in USDA zones 9(8b) to 11.