



Scientific Name:

Iris pseudopumila

Synonym:

Iris panormitana
Iris pseudopumila
subsp. *gozoensis*

English:

Southern Dwarf Iris
Dwarf Bearded Iris

Maltese:

il-bellus

The Southern Dwarf Iris is a Maltese sub-endemic perennial. It occurs in garrigue and steppe environments, and whilst a rare species, plants are often locally widespread and numerous when in flower.

This Iris usually grows to 25-75cm in height; with its flat, broad, sword-like leaves being present all year round. The scented, bluish-violet or yellowish-brown flowers tend to have various colour combinations; a characteristic which enables botanists to identify from where a plant has been collected. In addition, the yellow variety differs from the blue one, as it is somewhat smaller and it flowers a few weeks earlier than the latter. Nonetheless, the Southern Dwarf Iris may be seen in flower between January and March, and after pollination, small black seeds fall from the wilted flower onto the soil.

The large, solitary flower and the bulbs of this Iris are sometimes illegally collected due to their high ornamental value. Occasionally, they are found planted in private gardens and other urban areas. Indeed, collection of the bulbs, cutting of the flowers, illegal dumping and trampling may threaten the survival of this species in the Maltese Islands. The Southern Dwarf Iris is strictly protected, and cannot be picked or harmed prior to obtaining permission from the competent authorities. In addition, Special Areas of Conservation have been designated to further safeguard this species and its habitat.