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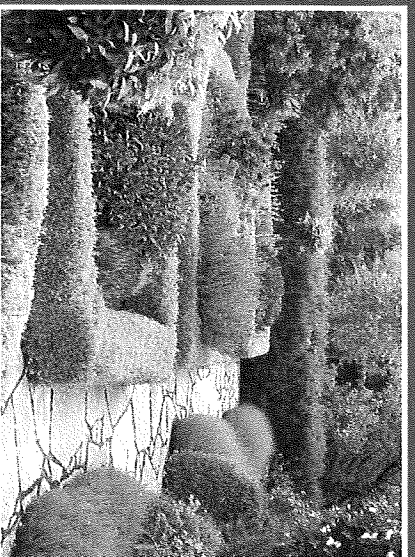
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**BOLD BREEDER
TERRY HATCH**



**CROMWELL DELL
PROVIDES CHARM**



**HOW TO
GROW PLUMS**



WIN: Bahco secateurs and garden tools

Provocative **perennials**



Terry Hatch's name is synonymous with adventurous plant propagation in New Zealand. **MIKE GOWING** talks to the nurseryman whose diverse Pukekohe nursery, **Joy Plants**, is a byword in the garden industry.

IT'S easy to see why Terry Hatch is legendary in New Zealand horticultural circles. He's a one-man plant bank, and for every plant variety, it seems, he has a story. Take irises, for example.

"Did I mention the irises?" he enthuses. "I grow these fabulous irises."

"I was out there yesterday in that wind and there they were, flying like a flock of lavender and purple birds – they were really beautiful."

"The big ones, they don't do that."

Just how the "big ones" were refined to play their part in the rippling sea of colour at Terry's nursery typifies the saga of this humorously irreverent, eagle-eyed propagator.

The iris story stems from a chance encounter with renowned Japanese horticulturist and iris expert Dr Shuichi Hirao 12 years ago. Terry, unwowed, told him he didn't particularly care for Japanese irises – too big for his liking.

"I said, 'I don't know if it's rude to say this to a Japanese, but I prefer irises to look like irises, not dinner plates'. Then I

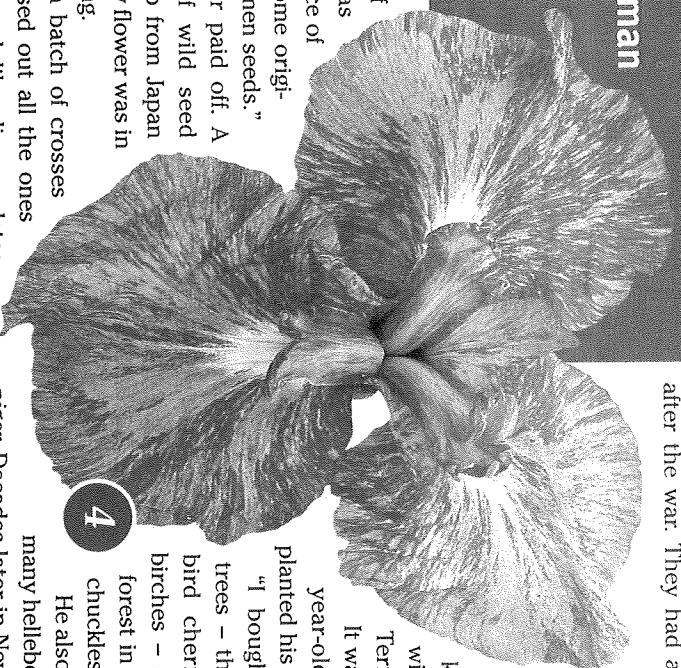
asked if there was any chance of getting some original specimen seeds."

Candour paid off. A packet of wild seed turned up from Japan and a new flower was in the making.

"I did a batch of crosses and crossed out all the ones that flowered like dinner plates and kept the singles. From there on, I've gradually weeded out all the ones with extra petals and we're back down to these more graceful things."

London-born Terry has been around plants most of his 65 years – and then some. He traces his horticultural ancestry to Huguenots who fled France to "grow flowers in London".

The London blitz and the Dig for Victory campaign – which saw besieged Britons turn wasteland into garden allotments during WWII – are among his earliest memories.



"I used to go out and collect all the manure from the coal and milkman's horses – they always did it outside our house, which was amazing – and I had enough there for liquid manure to grow beans and mustard and cress on a sheet," he laughs. "A bomb dropped over the road, blew all slates off our house and they came down and chopped up all my mustard and cress. I was totally wild at Hitler."

Dagenham was a village in the Essex countryside when the family settled there after the war. They had a "huge garden" which yielded, among its bounty, an exotic treat – sweetcorn.

"Mum didn't know what to do with the stuff," Terry recalls.

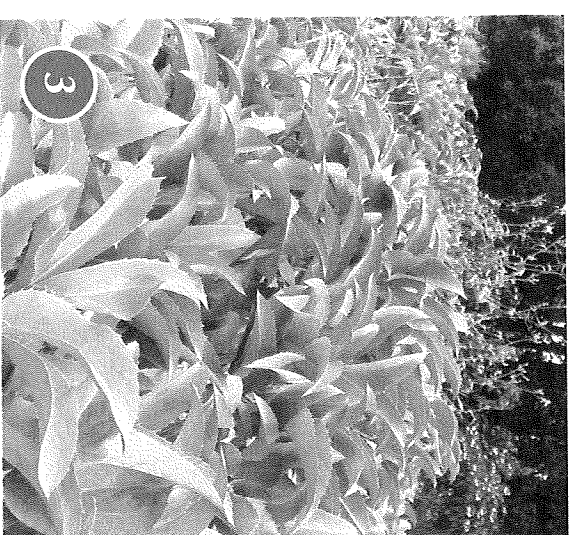
It was here, as a six-year-old, that Terry planted his first trees.

"I bought a bundle of trees – they were mainly bird cherries and silver birches – and I planted a forest in this garden," he chuckles.

He also grew the first of many hellebores – *Helleborus niger*. Decades later in New Zealand, Terry would turn his hand to hellebores and bring out his own range of 'Joy' hybrids.

He left school just before his 15th birthday – armed with experience from a part-time job in a local nursery – to take an apprenticeship with the local parks department. Military service and a two-year stint as a wireless operator in Cyprus intervened. Even there he had a garden – "melons, a few flowers, local tulips".

"After living in England it was an eye-opener just how warm it was in other parts of the world," he says.



1. TERRY HATCH wanted his irises to "look like irises" and not dinner plates.

2. A BATCH of astellas raised at Joy Plants. One of Terry's recent cultivars will premier in Xanthe White's exhibit at the next Chelsea Flower Show.

3. TERRY has a particular interest in hellebores. This variety, with its architectural foliage, is a selected form of *Helleborus sternii*.

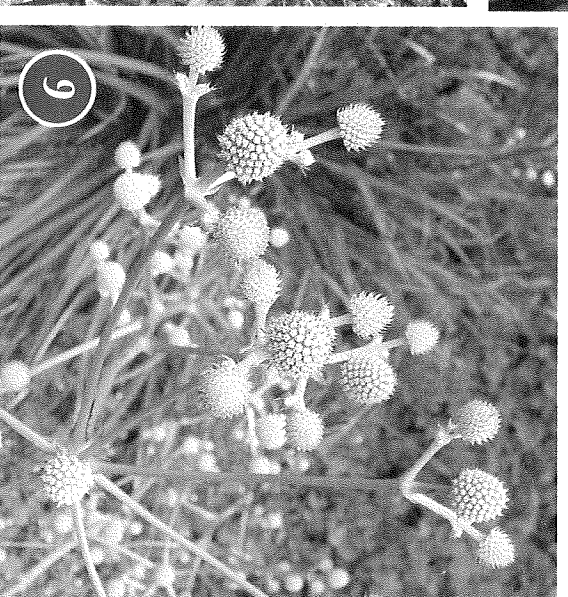
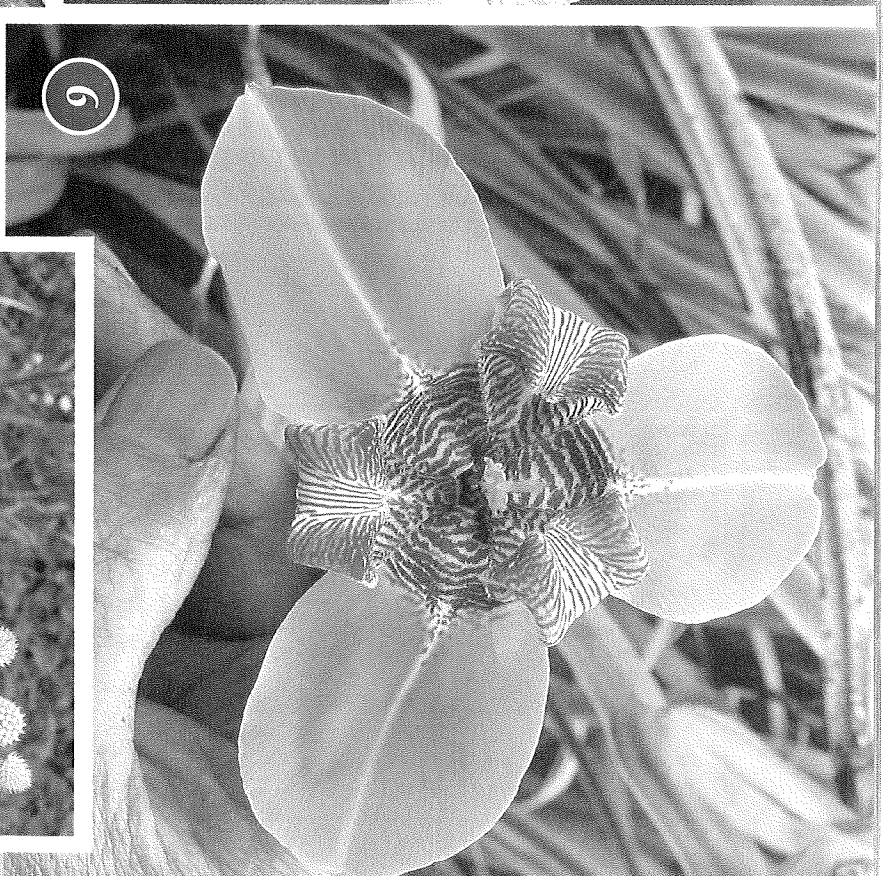
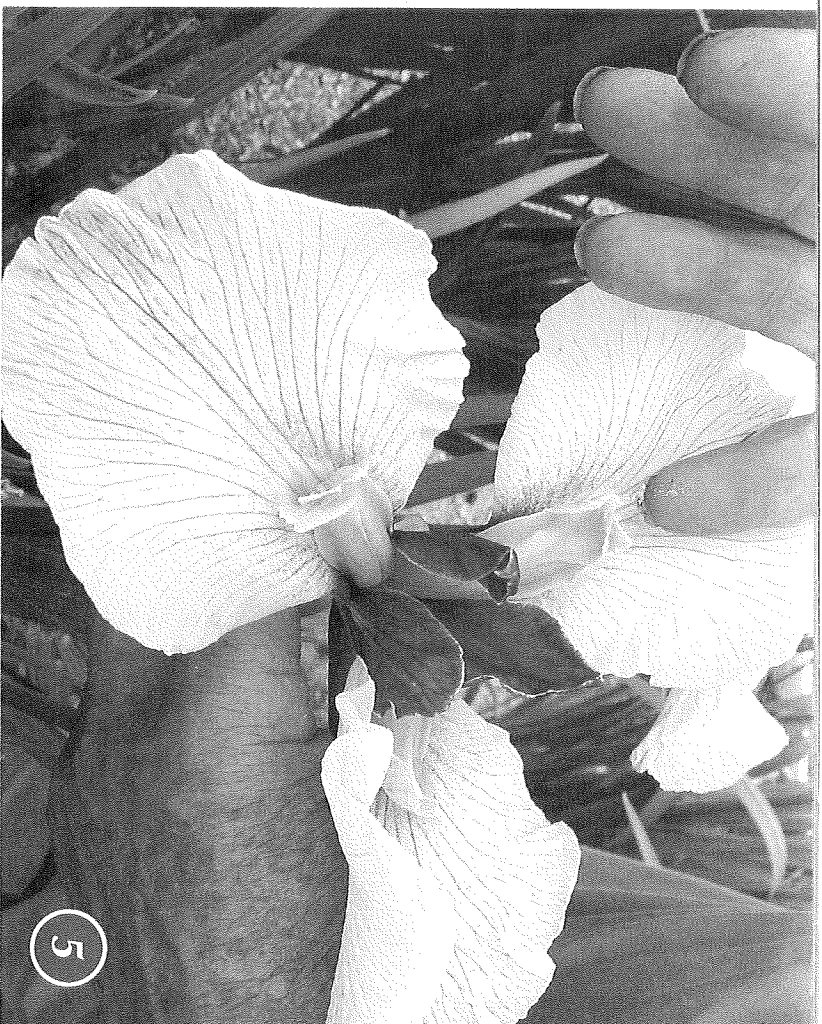
4. AFTER many years of cross-breeding, Terry has produced a spectacular range of beautiful single irises, which have, as yet, been unnamed.

And the English climate helped drive him and new wife Pamela to immigrate to New Zealand in 1963.

He'd grown our hebes under glass in England, and on the six-week ship's passage he boned up on native flora, poring over Laing and Blackwell's *Plants of New Zealand*.

But when he got here he found most Kiwis weren't much interested in growing natives.

He started off as manager for nurseryman John Pettit and later supplied plants to Muriel Fisher who, with her husband



5. TERRY crosses all his irises by hand.
6. THIS tall-growing rhizomatous perennial, *Neomarica caerulea*, can be seen in the display garden at Joy Plants.
7. ANOTHER of Terry's exquisite irises.
8. THE Canary foxglove, *Isoplexis isabelliana*, bears flowers resembling the common foxglove. It likes a sheltered position and grows to about 2m high.
9. THIS intriguing plant is *Eryngium eburneum*.
10. JOY PLANTS has a range of interesting plants, including *Lomandra longifolia*. It grows in sun or partial shade and can withstand drought and frost.

Bill, built up a collection of more than 700 native plants on their Birkenhead property.

By the mid-60s Terry had established his own outfit Joy Plants in Manurewa, named after Pamela's middle name. He sold plants such as fuschias to McKenzies shop chain and did landscaping work. The business moved to Pukekohe in 1973. Just three years ago another shift put them on the 10ha block the nursery occupies today.

The new nursery, overseen by Terry's 35-year-old son Lindsey and with Pamela continuing to run the books, is a work in progress where practically rules. A stand of large totara provides the shade necessary to rear seedlings. The trees also shield seed stock, such as the clivias Terry has bred since the 70s. Display gardens are becoming established and two hectares are planted in natives for seed for the future.

It's another commitment to conservation from a man who, two decades ago, made it his business to plant 35,000 pohutukawa seedlings raised from collected seed, most of them on Mercury Island off the Coromandel coast.

Meanwhile, one of Terry's recent native cultivars is destined to premier at the next Chelsea Flower Show. His russet-coloured *Astelia chathamica* X 'Chatham Rise' has been chosen for designer Xanthe White's 100% Pure New Zealand exhibit.

"They're lovely big, round, golden plums. You bite into them and they're so sweet, but then when you taste the skin it's absolutely sour."

Ask him how he knew what to look for and you already suspect the skill comes from a lifetime of experience.

"It just looked different. It looked strong and you see that – there's something that's different when a plant first germinates. A plant breeder will pick this out so you don't have to grow a million of the things – it's just your eye and a feel for plants."

While plant fads may change, with even his beloved perennials falling from favour, "someone has to hang on to the rest". Thus the future of Joy Plants, and the outcasts, is in good hands.

"Lindsey has the same outlook on life as Pam and I do, and he'll keep it going," says Terry.

And the green genes look set to continue through Terry's 11 grandchildren, especially one keen grandson.

"Already he's mad on plants. He's been that way since he was one, just like Lindsey was at that age, pushing his barrow."

And what of Terry?

"Hopefully, I'm going to slow down. Instead of doing 14 hours a day I'm only doing 12, but I'll keep breeding plants until I drop."