

IRIS - BEARDED CULTURAL INSTRUCTIONS

Planting

Mid July through September is best for planting. Planting earlier will reduce the following years bloom and lower the chance of winter survival. Divide and replant every 3-4 years. Plant in a well prepared, clean, sunny location using a fertilizer containing very little nitrogen, but high in phosphorous and potassium. If manure is going to be used it must be completely rotted (composed) and worked in prior to planting. Plant the rhizome level with the ground surface in clay soils and about 2" deep in sandy soils. Avoid deep cultivation as iris are shallow rooted. Water only when planting, little water is needed after this, unless weather conditions are extremely dry. A mulch of wheat straw or weed free hay is beneficial in winter. Cut off flower stalks close to the base of the plant when flowers fade. Remove any dead and badly spotted leaves. Cut back the foliage to 6-7" from ground in late fall and at planting time

Insect and disease control

NUMBER ONE RULE - remove all dead material from around the plants in the spring. Borer eggs and fungus spores overwinter on dead leaves. Pests can be greatly reduced by removing dead leaves from the garden area.

Iris Borer

Watch for signs of tunneling and prune off the affected foliage below where the damage is. The caterpillar, still quite small, will be trapped inside the section you've removed, and you can destroy it. If you are noticing rot at the base of the stalk, dig up the rhizomes to inspect. If you see tunneling into the rhizome, but are unsure whether or not the borer is still inside, soak the rhizome in water. The borer will drown. Inspect the rhizome. If the damage isn't too bad, cut away the damaged areas, let the cut dry for several hours, and replant.

Bacterial Soft Rot

A soft mushy rot with a very strong odour. Caused by lush growth, too rich a soil, too much water, failure to clean dead leaves in the spring or injury to rhizome allowing the bacteria to become established. Agricultural gypsum sprinkled on infected plants is beneficial. Dig and scrape rot from rhizome and air dry for several days. Dust with sulphur or gypsum and replant.

Iris

Siberian and Japanese Iris normally have narrower leaves and smaller, fibrous rhizomes than Bearded Iris. Take advantage of the varied bloom periods of bearded (dwarf, intermediate, tall) Siberian and Japanese Iris to enjoy colour from early spring to early July.

Acid Loving Iris (*Iris sibirica*)

Siberian Iris are very hardy and once established will grow well for many years. They should be planted in humus filled soil, on the acid side, with a high moisture level but good drainage. Irrigate freely. Siberian Iris resent transplanting. When you receive them you will notice that they are packed in peat or other moisture retaining materials. Leaves are dry above packing. You can add a little moisture to the bag and set it in a lit (no direct sun - under a tree is good) place and wait until there is evidence of root growth, then plant them carefully. Shake peat or other packing material out of roots before planting (this applies to prepacked spring material). Spread roots over ridge as with bearded Iris. Cover crown with at least 2 inches of soil. Keep moist until established.

Japanese Iris (*Iris ensata*)

Japanese Iris a large flat beardless Iris usually with only 3 or 6 petals blooming in early July. Flower stalks average about 30 inches with large 8" - 10" flowers. The size depends on the amount of moisture and fertility. Plant in mid September in a rich, well prepared spot making sure roots don't dry out. They are heavy feeders and require lots of moisture. They should be planted in damp areas or near water. Work in lots of peat prior to planting and make yearly applications of garden sulphur and iron sulphate. Feed twice yearly with a Rhododendron and Azalea fertilizer. Plants may die back completely after planting but will resume growth in spring.

Dwarf Bearded Iris (*Iris x pumila*)

Dwarf Bearded Iris - This small growing plant is ideally suited to the rock garden or the front of the perennial border. Rock Iris bloom early in the spring (May or at the beginning of June). This Iris grows to only about 8" tall (20cm) and has a spread of upto 12" (30CM). These plants are very hardy and are available in many colours including blue, pink, purple, redbronz, white and yellow as well as a combination of blue and white blooms. Rock Iris prefer well drained garden soil.