

# Iris

## Iris

The Iris family is extremely diverse in color and size. The classic flowers have three inner segments (the standards) and three outer segments (the falls). Color can include shades of white, yellow, orange, blue, purple and red. Combinations of these colors is also common. Many flowers are fragrant and all are well suited for use as cut flowers. Plant sizes range from 4" - 28" with flowers ranging from 3"-6" wide.

### Planting and Care

#### Site requirements for German Bearded, Dutch and Bucharica Iris

- Choose a sunny location with well drained soil.
- Iris tolerate dry and low fertility locations. Should you need to fertilize, blood meal or bone meal can be raked into the soil surrounding the plant. In extremely poor soil, a balanced fertilizer may be applied once, around the end of April.
- If mulch is used it should be kept well away from rhizomes (German) to reduce the possibility of rotting.
- Poor drainage or continuously moist conditions will lead to rotting and an increased susceptibility to Iris Borer Infestation (German).

#### Site Requirements for Siberian & Japanese Iris

- Choose a sunny location.
- These plants prefer moist soil. Siberian Iris tolerates ordinary soil and part sun.
- Fertile soil is best. The addition of organic compost matter and the planting time is beneficial to the health of the plant.
- Mulch may be used lightly. Be sure not to place mulch over rhizomes.

### Planting

#### German Bearded, Japanese & Siberian (rhizome)

- Plant each rhizome so tha the small roots are spread out and buried, but the fleshy portion is at or slightly above the soil surface.
- Space plants roughly 12" apart. Overcrowding tends to increase moisture retention which can lead to rhizome rot and bore invasion.

#### Dutch & Bucharica (bulb)

- Dig a hole 3"-4" deep.
- Place each bulb so that the pointed end faces upward and the slightly flattened end is in contact with the soil at the bottom of the hole.
- Back fill the soil on top of the bulb and tamp the soil lightly to remove any air pockets.
- It is recommended that the directions on the package be read for additional directions.

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## Dividing

- Plan to divide Iris clumps every four to five years. The best time to transplant is in midsummer, about six weeks after flowering. Dig the clump carefully to avoid injuring rhizomes.
- Examine each rhizome for borer and soft rotted spots. Bag or burn leaves, flower stalks and any extra rhizomes, which will not be planted.
- Rot is most often present when irises are crowded or covered with mulch. Cut away all of the rotted area and any borers. Dip the rhizome in bleach. Bag or burn leaves, flower stalks and extra rhizomes, which will not be planted. Do not compost.
- Wash the soil from the roots and rhizome, snap off the flower stalks and fan. To fan leaves, simply cut the leaves to the desired height. Separate the rhizomes, saving the plump, healthiest ones to replant. You may discard any rhizomes that have produced a flower stalk as they will not do so again.
- Iris will benefit from one day of curing. This allows time for any new cuts to callus over and reduces the chance of rot.
- Replant following the directions above.

## Leafspot

- Brown spots appear and might grow larger to cover a large area of leaf.
- Leafspot looks unsightly but will not kill the plant.
- Remove spotted leaves. Burn or bag, do not compost.

## Grooming

- Spent flowers can be clipped or snapped off.
- Remove spent flower stalks by snapping them forward sharply. Snapping allows a clean separation from the rhizome at a natural separation point.
- Multiple flowers form on each stalk so be sure the plant is finished flowering before removing stalks.
- Delay fanning until late October or November. This allows green leaf tissue to continue to feed the rhizome for as long as possible. Fan to eight inches.

Rhizome- somewhat elongate usually horizontal subterranean plant stem that is often thickened by deposits of reserve food material, produces shoots above and roots below, and is distinguished from a true root in possessing buds, nodes, and usually scalelike leaves.



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