

How to Grow Iris

Iris come in a rainbow of colors, and they're one of the easiest perennials to grow. With a minimum of care they will reward you with beautiful blooms year after year. Follow a few simple steps and you'll be a successful iris grower.

When to Plant

For best results, iris should be planted in July, August or September. It's imperative that the roots of newly planted iris be well established before the growing season ends.

Where to Plant

Iris need at least a half day of sun. In extremely hot climates some shade is beneficial, but in most places iris do best in full sun. Be sure to provide you iris good drainage, planting either on a slope or in raised beds.

Soil Preparation

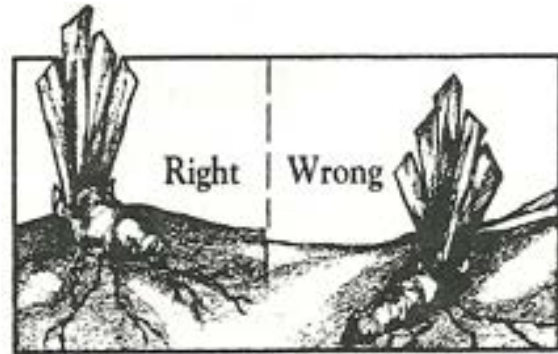
Iris will thrive in most well-drained garden soils. Planting on a slope or in raised beds helps ensure good drainage. If your soil is heavy, compost or humus may be added to improve drainage.

The ideal pH is 6.8 (slightly acidic), but iris are tolerant in this regard. To adjust the pH of your soil, lime may be added to acidic soils or sulfur to alkaline ones. It is always best to have your soil analyzed before taking corrective measures.

While preparing your soil, soak iris in water for 10-15 minutes to reconstitute the roots and rhizome.

Depth to Plant

Iris should be planted so the tops of the rhizomes are exposed and the roots are spread out facing downward in the soil. Firm the soil around each rhizome and then water to help settle the soil. A common mistake is to plant iris too deeply.



Proper depth is critical!

Distance apart

Iris are generally planted 12-24 inches apart. Close planting gives an immediate effect, but closely planted iris will need to be thinned often. Plants spaced further apart will need less frequent dividing.

Watering

Newly set plants need moisture to help their root systems become established. Specific watering information depends on your climate and your soil, but keep in mind that deep watering at long intervals is better than more frequent shallow watering. Once established, iris normally don't need to be watered except in extreme draught conditions. Over watering is a common error. Re-blooming iris do require a little extra watering during the summer however, to produce their fall blooms.

Fertilization

Specific fertilizer recommendations depend on your soil type, but bone meal, super phosphate and 6-10-10 are all effective. A light application at planting, again in the early spring and a second application about a month after bloom will reward you with good growth and blooms. Avoid using anything high in nitrogen, as nitrogen encourages rot problems.

Thinning Old Clumps

Iris need to be thinned or divided before they become over crowded, generally every 3-4 years. If iris are allowed to become too crowded the bloom will suffer, some varieties may crowd others out and disease problems may be aggravated. Dig up the entire clump, separate the rhizomes (removing any diseased or damaged ones) and replant them as soon as possible.

General Garden Care

Keep your iris beds clean and free of weeds and debris, allowing the tops of the rhizomes to bask in the sun. Bloom stems should be cut off close to the ground after blooming. Healthy green leaves should be left undisturbed, but diseased or brown leaves should be removed.

Types of Bearded Iris

Dwarf Bearded: These miniature gems display their splendid bloom early in the spring. Ranging in height from 5-15 inches, these delightful iris are perfectly suited for edgings, borders or rock gardens.

Intermediate Bearded: Blooming after the dwarfs and reaching in height from 16-28 inches, these cheerful iris will brighten your garden and mix well with other favorite spring bloomers.

Tall Bearded: These are the gorgeous queens of the iris world. With magnificent 6 inch blooms displayed on stems over 29 inches high. The later-blooming flowers are available in every color of the spectrum and include an incredible variety of color patterns and combinations.

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