

# Growing Bearded Iris

A hardy perennial for northern gardens

Soil - Well drained

Light - Full Sun, at least 5 hours of mid-day sun

Drought Tolerant

Bloom Colors - Numerous

Divide every 3-4 years

Companions - Any full sun, drought tolerant perennials or annuals that like it on the dry side, spring-blooming bulbs

## Planting

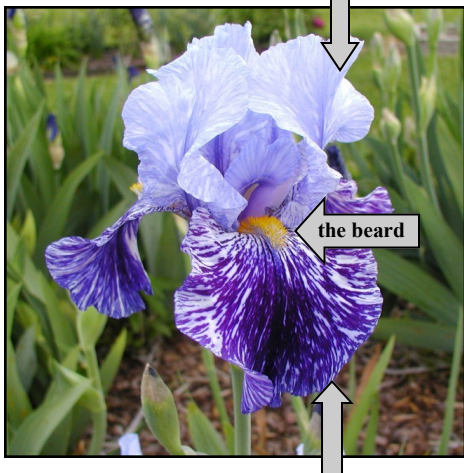
Bearded iris have a thickened rhizome with strap-like leaves at one end and roots coming off the rhizome.

Plant new divisions from mid-July to mid-August so they have time to develop new roots and become established before winter. Plant potted iris from early spring when you can safely work the soil until mid-September.

Amend the soil in the planting hole with compost and sprinkle Espoma Bio-Tone at the bottom of the hole. These amendments will help the plant establish robust roots provide organic matter for good drainage.

Space new plants 8-inches apart. Arrange the rhizome, which is actually a fleshy stem that is situated under ground, on top of a ridge in a shallow hole. Spread the roots out and cover them with soil. Only lightly cover the rhizome. Planting the rhizome too deeply will prevent the plant from flowering. Water well.

These petals are called "standards" and are the true petals



These petals are called "falls"

## Care & Concerns

In times of drought, provide 1-inch of water weekly.

**Weed** regularly. Remove spent flowering stalks from the plants after flowers fade.

**Fertilize** with a 5-10-5, or Espoma Flower-Tone, fertilizer when the leaves emerge in spring and then again 6-weeks later.

**Fall Care** Cut the leaves back to 6-inches in length after the first hard frost. After the ground has frozen (around Thanksgiving) mulch with straw or marsh hay. Slowly remove this mulch layer by layer in early spring leaving the last bit until the soil is firm and dry.

The only major **pest** is iris borer. The moth lays its eggs on the leaves in fall and they hatch the next spring. These tiny caterpillars then eat their way into the rhizome which causes an entry for bacteria to cause rot in the rhizome. This damage will cause the leaves to brown and die and ultimately kill the plant or clump.

To control iris borers, remove and dispose of any infected rhizomes and leaves. Clean up dead leaves and debris after hard frost in fall to remove the eggs and reduce borer numbers the following year. Also, when dividing iris, remove any damaged rhizomes.

To continue to control iris borer, apply the systemic insecticide Imidacloprid in a granular application at the base of the plants to the soil in spring. Carefully follow the label directions. Some report control is achieved even with a half dose application.



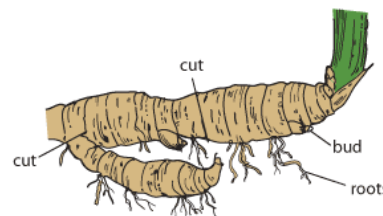
## Dividing



A cleaned division being planted. Note the shallow planting hole with the ridge in the center.

Consider division only after the iris has bloomed around the first of July. Begin by trimming back the leaves into a fan shape with clean, sharp scissors. This will help prevent damage to the leaves and shed off water. Freshly planted divisions will be susceptible to being knocked over by wind so these shorter leaves will help prevent that issue.

Lift large clumps of iris with a garden fork or spade. Shake off the soil and begin to separate the rhizomes. Don't be afraid to use a knife or sharp shovel to separate the rhizomes.



Evaluate each rhizome and cut away damaged or rotten sections with a clean sharp knife. Also trim away damaged roots. Allow the cuts to dry for several hours before re-planting. Cleaned rhizomes may also be stored for a couple of weeks prior to replanting. Write the variety name on each rhizome with a Sharpie pen if you wish.

Follow the planting instructions to the left.

A freshly planted array of Iris