

# Bearded Iris

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# BEARDED IRIS

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## Kinds of Iris

There are approximately 200 species of Iris. Several of these species can be purchased in many varieties. Most commonly grown in the Northern Hemisphere are the Bearded Iris. About 20 species are in this group. Bearded Iris are more commonly grouped by size than by species. The three common size groups are: Dwarf, Intermediate and Tall.

Dwarf Bearded Iris include varieties less than 12 inches in height. Intermediate Bearded Iris are 12 inches to 28 inches in height. Tall Bearded Iris run from about 28 inches to 5 feet.

## Soils and Where to Plant

Iris thrive in any good, well-drained garden soil. They should have full sun and good drainage. The soil can be enriched with bone-meal, superphosphate or 4-12-4 fertilizer. Follow directions on the package. DO NOT OVERFERTILIZE! DO NOT FERTILIZE WITH MANURE, UNLESS IT IS WELL ROTTED.

Iris bloom in late May and early June in normal seasons. They may be planted in clumps by themselves. They are also effective in the foundation planting or in a mixed border.



## When and How to Plant

Bearded Iris can be planted any time when the ground is not frozen. Late July or August, however, is the only desirable time to plant Iris in North Dakota. Iris are propagated by dividing the rootstocks. Clumps should be separated every 3 years for best results. Planting seed is not practical for the amateur. Iris do not come true from seed!

Plant 4 to 6 single rootstocks 8 inches apart to form a clump. Clumps should not be closer than 3 feet apart. If set closer, plants will become crowded quicker and have to be reset more often.

Set the rootstocks in a shallow hole. The hole should be large enough to accommodate the rootstocks and the attached fibrous roots. Cover the top of the rootstock with approximately 1 inch of soil. Firm the soil well. Cut the tops back to 4 to 6 inches at planting time.

## Hardiness

Iris are generally hardy in North Dakota. They will not, however, stand being under water for any length of time. Iris should be covered with some sort of mulch during the winter. Clean rye straw or marsh hay is good. Mulch is especially necessary if Iris are planted in an exposed location and not protected by a blanket of snow.

## Flowers

Iris have orchid-like flowers. Nine to 12 buds are usually found growing on short side branches on each stem. Each blossom lasts about 2 days. Each flower has 6 petals. Three of these are upright and are called standards. The other three petals are hanging and are known as falls. Iris may have standards and falls of the same color or standards may be one color and falls a different color. Principal Iris colors are lavender-blue, white, purple, rose-red, yellow or various combinations and blends of these colors.

Cut out the bloom stalks at the end of the blooming season.

## Varieties

As with many other ornamentals, varieties of Iris are numbered in the hundreds. Since hardiness is important in North Dakota, this list contains some of the proved hardy varieties. They are, for the most part, reasonable in price.

WHITE - Lady Boscawen, Matterhorn, Gudrun.

CREAM - Desert Song, Sunny Ruffles.

YELLOW - Ola Kala, Cloth of Gold, Solveg.

PINK - Pink Cameo, Twilight Sky, Coralie.

LAVENDER TO VIOLET - Violet Symphony, Mulberry Rose.

LIGHT BLUE - Azure Skies, Great Lakes.

MEDIUM BLUE - Blue Frills, Chivalry, Blue Rhythm.

DEEP BLUE - Danube Wave

PURPLE - Sable, Vatican Purple.

REDS - Ranger, Solid Mahogany.

BICOLOR - (light standards, dark falls) Wabash.

PLICATAS - (blue and white) Blue Shimmer, Kansas Bouquet.

VARIGATAS - (yellow standards, dark falls) Mexico, City of Lincoln.

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