



CIRCULAR H-113 (Revised)

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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. These are represented by several groups. The most common 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. They give a season of bloom extending from early May to mid-June, one class merging into the other. The intermediates are actually results of crossing the early dwarfs and the late, tall bearded iris. They are, as the name implies, intermediate in season of flowering and in height.

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 two days.

Three upright petals are called standards. Three petals (actually sepals) hang 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, pink, brown or various combinations and blends of these colors. The beard is the fuzzy, fringed appendage above the falls.

CULTURE: The requirements of all classes of bearded iris are reasonably simple. The two major requirements are sun and good drainage. The plants grow well in almost any good garden soil, but are less susceptible to disease, such as root rot, in soils of only moderate fertility. Extremely rich soils tend to produce soft growth. This increases problems with root rot, the most serious problem with iris.

Iris should not be crowded by other plants that overshadow or mat closely about roots and foliage. Keep your iris free of weeds by practicing clean, shallow cultivation. Free air movement in and about iris plants is the best insurance against foliage diseases.

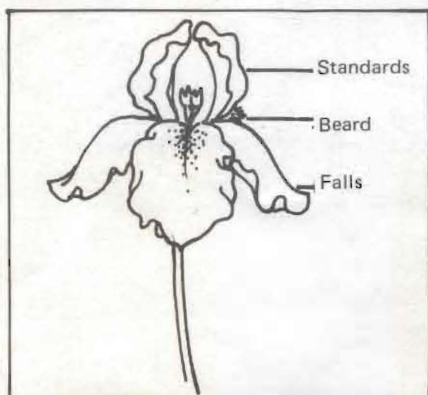


Fig. 1. Iris Flower Parts

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WHERE TO PLANT: Bearded iris are well adapted to garden planting, borders and flower beds in sunny sites. Where heavy, poorly drained soils are a problem, beds can be raised slightly above paths or sod areas to provide the necessary drainage.

Prepare beds a week to 10 days before planting to allow the soil time enough to settle. Deep spading assures an ideal planting bed for iris.

The use of barnyard manure on iris should be discouraged, since it favors development of root rots. Well rotted manure can be used when it is carefully worked into the soil, but surface applications are not advisable.

WHEN AND HOW TO PLANT: Bearded iris can be divided or planted almost any time, but late July or August is the ideal time to plant iris in North Dakota. They may be planted in clumps by themselves. They are also effective in foundation plantings.

DIVISION OF OLD CLUMPS: Bearded iris and many of the beardless types grow from an underground structure called a rhizome. This is a fleshy stalk (stem) from which extend the true, stringy roots. These rhizomes branch and in time overgrow and crowd each other so that it is necessary to dig and divide every 2-4 years under ordinary culture.

The division should be reduced to a single section of the rhizome with a single fan of leaves. Cut the leaves back to a length of 5-10 inches. Always discard weak or diseased parts.

Set the division in a shallow hole large enough to accommodate the division and the attached fibrous roots. Cover the top of the rhizome with approximately 1/2 inch of soil. Firm the soil well.

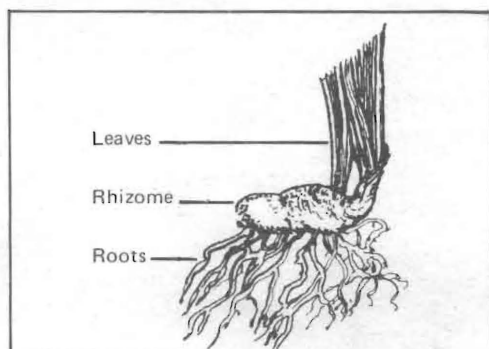


Fig. 2. Ready for Planting

Plant four to six single divisions 12-15 inches apart to form a group. Iris groups should be spaced about 4 feet apart. If set closer, plants will become crowded quicker and have to be reset more often. Planting seed is not practical for the amateur. Iris do not come true from seed!

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 winter. Clean flax straw is good. Mulch is especially necessary if iris are planted in an exposed location and not protected by a blanket of snow.

VARIETIES: As with many other ornamentals, there are hundreds of varieties of bearded iris. Since hardiness is important in North Dakota, this list contains some of the proven, reliable varieties. They are, for the most part, reasonable in price.

WHITE - Patrician, Wind Rhythm

CREAM - Cream Taffeta (pale yellow)

BUFF-ORANGE - Diamond Cup, My Jewell

YELLOW - Cool Comfort, Denver Mint, Ecu Lace, Golden Sensation, On Target

GOLD - Carolina Gold, Granada Gold, Ultrapoise

PINK - Esther Fay, Heart Beat, Heart Breaker, Pink Pussycat, Pretty Poise

LAVENDAR TO VIOLET - Ada Ann, Amethyst Flame, Enchanted Violet

PALE BLUE - Just Heaven, Londontown

MEDIUM BLUE - Babbling Brook

DEEP BLUE - Pacific Panorama

VIOLET - Blazing Violet, Grand Alliance

DEEP VIOLET - Congo Song, Study in Black

REDS - Post Time, Vitafire

AMOENA - (white or near white standards and colored falls) Miss Indiana (white/blue violet), Toll Gate (white/violet)

BICOLORS - (two colors—falls darker than standards) Burning Desire (bronze-red/hazelnut brown), Camelot Rose (orchid/burgundy)

PLICATA - (Stitched or stippled color on light background) Lavender-Violet/White—Dot and Dash, Emma Cook, Silver Peaks, Stepping Out; Honey-Browns/White or Yellow—Chinquapin, My Honeycomb, Radiant Apogee, Siva Siva, Wild Apache

VARIEGATA - (yellow standards and dark falls) Allouetta, Timely Way

ROSE TO DEEP ROSE - Gracie Pfost, Raspberry Ripples

BRONZE - Millionaire, Rusticana, Velvet Brass

Arthur Jensen, Rural Route 1, Fargo, has made helpful suggestions in the preparation of this circular.