

Planting Irises



When to Plant

For best results, plant from June through September. Planting earlier in the season will allow the iris to establish roots and give it a better chance of survival through the winter.

This is also the time to divide clumps of iris that are overcrowded or those that are 3-4 years old.

Where to Plant

The ideal location for irises is a sunny, well-drained area. They will need an area that receives at least 6 hours of good sunlight. Irises do not do well in deep shade.

Planting Depth & Spacing

Iris leaves should be trimmed 6-8" in a fan shape prior to planting. Spaced 12 -24" apart, plant rhizomes just below the surface of the ground. In fact, it is okay for the top of the rhizome to show above the surface of the earth.

Spread the roots out underneath by making a small mound of soil in the center of the hole and spreading the roots out and down. The pointy side of the rhizome should face up. Irises will benefit from some sunlight reaching the top of the rhizome.

Water the soil gently to settle in the new plant.

Feeding

Irises can thrive without feeding, but will reward you handsomely when fertilized properly. In preparation for a new iris bed, mix a good amount of compost with the existing soil below the roots.

Add bone meal or a small amount of phosphate to the soil prior to planting the rhizomes and mix in well. You may apply a good fertilizer prior to bloom season, but use a formula of 5-10-10. If the nitrogen is too high, the plant will grow many leaves but fewer flowers.

Cultivating

Iris feeder roots are near the surface. Keep the rhizome free of weeds and do not allow neighboring plants to encroach upon them.

They need sunlight down to the rhizome. Keep grass, weeds, and other plants away from rhizomes. Brown leaves can be trimmed off at any time.

(continued on back)

Dividing/Thinning Irises

This is important because not only does it help prevent the spread of disease, but it also encourages bigger blooms.

1. Dig up the clump taking care not to damage the rhizome.
2. Shake off or wash the soil from the rhizome as well as the roots.
3. Old rhizomes that have become spongy should be discarded.
4. Younger rhizomes will be lighter in color and firm. Keep the younger rhizomes for replanting.
5. Trim the leaves of the iris to about 1/3 of their height.
6. When replanting, space rhizomes 12-24" apart.
7. Mix compost in with existing soil to replace nutrients.
8. Water deeply once replanted.