

HOW TO GROW IRIS

9 EASY RULES FOR BEAUTIFUL BLOOMS

Iris is one of the easiest perennials to grow. They thrive with minimal care and reward the gardener with beautiful, exotic blooms.

Location. Plant your Iris in an area that receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight for the best blooming. Iris will grow in shadier spots but you're blooming will be compromised. Work the top layer of the soil and add compost to help break up our heavy clay.

Planting depth. In clay soil, the rhizome should be partially exposed on the surface. Planting too deep in these conditions may cause the rhizome to rot. Do make sure that the roots are spread out and covered.

Watering. A newly planted Iris will want one good soaking a week through the first growing season. Established clumps really don't require much watering except occasionally during periods of drought.

Dividing and transplanting. Iris clumps will slow down, shrink in size and quit blooming if they get too crowded so they should be divided every 3-5 years. Dig up the clump, cut off and separate healthy outer rhizomes. Discard older center rhizomes. Cut back leaf "fans" to about 6 inches and replant. The best time to divide or transplant Iris is July or August. When moving Iris cut back foliage to 6 inches to help plant balance the missing roots.

Possible problems. Soft-rot is a problem that affects the rhizome of the Iris. Soft-rot can be caused by a number of things including physical injury, like nicking with a garden tool, a late freeze, being buried too deeply or Iris borers.

Preventing borers. Keeping your Iris patch clean is important in controlling the pest. The Iris borer's eggs overwinter on leaves and other undergrowth through winter. Remove and dispose of all vegetation.

Treating borers. The small larvae start eating on leaves in spring and work their way down to the rhizome. Leaves will appear ragged and show a gummy secretion. Once larvae reaches the rhizome, spray with Imidacloprid mixed to 1 teaspoon per gallon.

Reversion. Some think that if planting many varieties together they could change colors or revert to the original purple. Actually though, it's seed pods that are left to mature on the plant and drop that grow and can crowd out the others. Cut back bloom stalk before they seed to prevent this.

