



Minnesota State
**Horticultural
Society** 



Growing Irises

**Detailed planting and care
instructions**

Bearded

Light: Choose 6-8 hours of full sun for maximum bloom.

Soil: Well-draining soil (do not mulch; it invites rot and iris borer).

Spacing: At least 18" to 24" apart, plant groups of 3+ in a triangle.

Bloom time: Typically in May and June, possibly late April. Some varieties may rebloom with additional watering and fertilizer; check with the Iris Society of MN for a list of reliable rebloomers in Minnesota.

Dividing: Dig one clump and break from mother rhizome, cut foliage back and trim the roots to about 3 inches. Plant the crown above soil level.

Beardless

Light: Choose 6-8 hours of full sun for maximum bloom.

Soil: Well-draining organic soil. Range of slightly acidic to slightly alkaline; be sure to check specific iris type for conditions.

Fertilizing: Keep soil rich with composted manure. Use fertilizers with a lower 'N' number than P and K.

Bloom time: About a month after bearded irises in USDA zones 4+

Dividing: Divide when the plant resembles a ring with an empty center. Fall transplanting is best to give time for roots and rhizomes to anchor. Try not to replant in the same soil; new soil will produce the best blooms.

Other

Light: Nearly all irises prefer full sun with limited shade for best blooms.

Soil: Consistently moist yet well-draining soil makes most irises the happiest.

Fertilizing: Higher P/K fertilizers and composted soil are ideal.

Dividing: Transplant in fall if possible. Keep rhizomes from drying out. Always cut foliage back and trim roots before replanting.

Growing Irises

Common pests, issues, and solutions

Iris Borer



Adults are called 'miller moths' and have a 2-inch wingspan. Larvae grow up to 2 inches long with a light stripe down the back and rows of black dots. Young larvae are usually greener, while adults have pink tone with brown heads.

Adults emerge in late August to early September and lay eggs on the foliage of irises. It's best to remove damaged or dead leaves at this time, otherwise eggs will overwinter and hatch in the spring. Do not compost.

Once hatched, larvae will feed for several weeks by tunneling into the leaves and working down into the rhizomes. Foliage will look waterlogged.

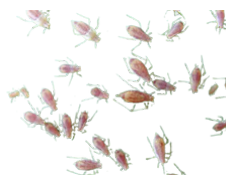
Iris borers are the most serious pest of the iris.



For these and all other diseases,
prevention is the best cure!

- Remove spotted, dead or infected leaves
- Plant in full sun with good air circulation
- Disinfect tools with 1 part bleach to 9 parts water
- Wash hands thoroughly after working with irises

Aphids



Small green or gray insects that act as 'sapsuckers' by slowly feeding on leaf sap. They may also spread disease this way.

Physical removal is best; crush between your fingers or spot treat with insecticidal soap. Ladybugs are also natural predators.

Tunnelers (crickets, moles, other insects)



Because irises grow by rhizomes, they are susceptible to ground-dwelling mammals and insects that either feed on the rhizome or tunnel around it, affecting the plant and stunting its growth.

You can keep these critters out of the garden by avoiding other practices that invite them in, such as leaving out excess food or keeping your soil too moist. Try to keep any compost away from your garden.

Other Diseases

Leaf blight,
Fungal leaf spot,
Bacterial soft rot

Bacterial leaf blight causes large, irregular spots that first appear near the margins on leaf tips. Eventually, spots grow larger with whitish or grayish centers. Infection follows the leaf veins down the leaves. **Fungal leaf spot** appears similar, though spots are smaller. Both occur during foggy, rainy weather and survive over winter. **Bacterial soft rot** can wipe out an entire plant and mainly affects bearded irises. Starts in the rhizomes as foul-smelling rot.