

Intro to Irises

History, Varieties and Significance in the World

Iris species are found in almost every habitat and on almost every continent. With around 280 species, irises flourish in many climates all over the northern hemisphere. The diversity of the genus is quite impressive. In addition to the naturally occurring species, there are tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of hybrids available.



Family Iridaceae

Consists of about 80 genera, of which one is *Iris*. Others are referred to as Irids, or "Iris-like plants"



Bearded Iris

Six-lobed and symmetrical atop a tall stem. Three true petals stand upright and are called standards. The other three 'petals' droop down and outwards and are called 'falls'.



Crested Iris

Native to the mild to temperate woodlands of eastern Asia and parts of North America.



Beardless Iris

Popular for extending the iris growing season after the tall bearded types fade.

Color Patterns

In ancient Greek, the word "iris" means "rainbow". Their flower colors cover the full spectrum.

Amoena

White standards with colored falls

Bicolor

Standards and falls are a different color

Bitone

Standards and falls are a different shade

Luminata

White or yellow with color washed over it

Neglecta

Blue or purple bitones, standards are lighter

Self

Standards and falls are same color

Plicata

White or carotene with contrasting edges

Variegata

Yellow standards with brown or purple falls

Intro to Irises

History, Varieties and Significance in the World

There are about 350 species of iris. All are native to the Northern Hemisphere. Different species can be adaptable to widely different growing conditions. There are over 30 species that will grow well in Minnesota. Along with bearded, beardless, and crested, there are also **bulbous irises** (*Xiphium*, *Reticulatae* and *Juno*), **novelty irises** (irises that deviate from the mainstream in form, pattern or other characteristics), and **space age irises** (novelty irises that grow extensions at the ends of their beards).

Minnesota hardy species

- **Iris domestica:** Also known as Blackberry lily, and sometimes referred to as Blackberry Iris, is native to China, and has naturalized in the United States. This iris will do well in full sun to light shade.
- **Iris aphylla:** Often crossed with bearded iris to increase branching and bud counts in the resulting offspring. It grows 6-12" tall.
- **Iris biglumis** a.k.a. **Iris lactea:** Hardy in zones 1-10. Native to Russia (Siberia), China and Mongolia. It grows 2-16" high
- **Iris versicolor:** Known as Northern Blue Flag Iris. As the botanical name implies, this species varies greatly in flower color. It generally grows from 18" to 30" tall and prefers moist conditions. Native to the Northeastern United States, and north into Canada, this species occupies the largest territory of any North American iris. It grows from northern Newfoundland, westward to Wale River, Hudson Bay, Quebec, and Saskatchewan, southward to South Carolina and west to Arkansas. Naturally growing hybrids can vary considerably in color.
- **Iris pseudoacorus** a.k.a. **yellow flag iris:** Grows as a bog plant. Yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) is a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regulated invasive species in Minnesota. It is legal to possess, sell, buy, and transport, but they may not be introduced into a free-living state, such as being released or planted in public waters. It should not be used for shoreline planting along public waters because the plant can effectively spread to other areas of the water body by rhizomes and seed movement during times of high water. If you should grow it, do not plant it in or along natural waterways.

