



"Your Outdoor Source"

2442 State Route 27 – North Brunswick, NJ 08902 – (732) 297-1244 – Open Seven Days

Grow bearded iris for sparkling color

Few other perennials rival bearded iris for sparkling color

Iris flowers are exotic beauties with three petals called "standards" that reach up and three petals, called "falls" that hang down like ball gown skirts. "Beard" refers to fuzzy hairs on the falls.

Modern iris cultivars are highly bred, originating from crosses made over many years of many species, including *Iris germanica*, *I. pallida* and *I. florentina*.

Today's irises have stronger stems and more blooms over a longer bloom period than older cultivars.

Their ruffled flowers, set off by attractive, sword-like leaves, cover the spectrum from blues, yellows and soft pinks to lustrous whites and almost blacks.

Shades of gold, apricot, orange, russet and dusky burgundy are popular.

Many cultivars have flowers rimmed with yellow or white, or vivid splotches of contrasting color.

How to grow bearded iris

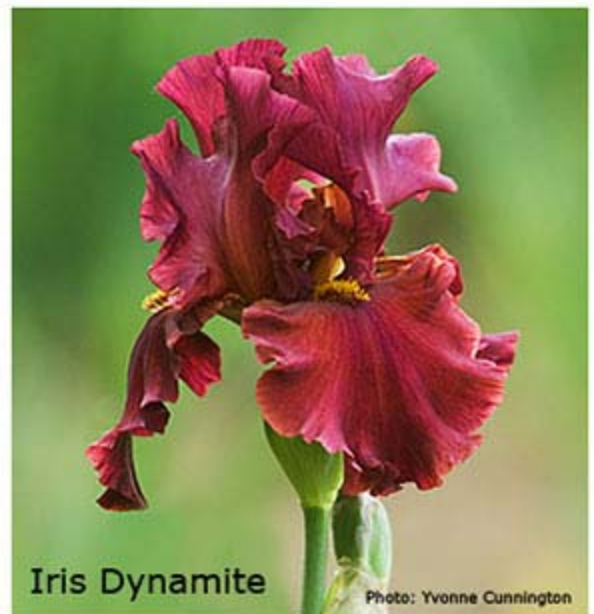
Most bearded iris cultivars are hardy to Zone 3. Plant them in light, well-drained soil and full sun - at least six hours daily.

Avoid heavy clay; well drained clay soil that has been **amended** with coarse sand, compost or manure is fine. (Be sure to use well-aged manure or it could promote rot, to which iris rhizomes susceptible).

The plants grow from thick rhizomes that sit horizontally at or just below ground level, the true roots that penetrate the soil coming out of the rhizome.

Container grown plants are offered in spring, and bare root rhizomes are available in mid- to late summer. Buying bare-root is less expensive, and growers of sought-after new cultivars sell plants this way.

Because bare root irises are planted in summer, they don't have much time to get established, which can make them susceptible to frost-heave in some regions over the winter. To avoid this, plant rhizomes as early as possible, preferably by early to mid-August.





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Step-by-step planting tips:

Spacing: Set rhizomes about 16 to 18 inches (40 to 46 cm) apart for taller types; eight to 10 inches (20 to 25 cm) apart for dwarf iris.

They look best in triangular clumps of three; space clumps 24 inches (60 cm) from other plants for good air circulation.

Pot-grown irises: Remove from pot, being careful not to disturb roots. Plant at same level as iris was growing in pot.

Bare-root: Dig a hole as deep as rhizome's true roots. Inside the hole, make a hill high enough to hold rhizome at ground level or slightly below; cover roots with soil. Don't fertilize until the second season.

To cover rhizome or not: Most planting instructions advise against covering rhizomes. However, professional iris growers in regions that experience frequent freeze/thaw cycles without reliable snow cover recommend covering rhizomes with about an inch (2.5 cm) of soil or sand; this helps prevent frost heaving and root rot. Avoid mulching bearded iris with wood chips or leaves.

Watering: After planting, water well and, depending on rainfall, continue to water every three days for a the first month.