

Central Texas

Sun City Horticulture Club

Understanding the Needs of Bearded Iris

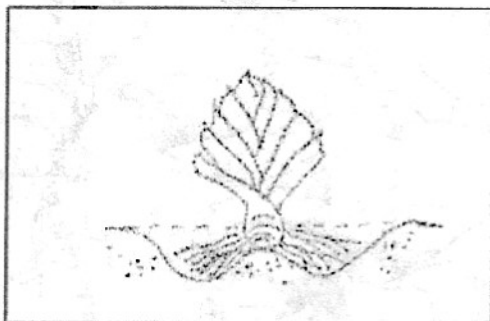
When to Plant: Plant rhizomes in late summer through early fall. It is important that the roots be established before the first hard freeze or killing frost.

Where: Irises require (6-8 hours) of direct sunlight during the growing season. Full sun is best. Locate a sunny spot which does not receive heavy shade, especially in the spring when flower stalks emerge. Shade at the wrong time of year causes stalks to bend trying to grow into the light.

SOIL: Irises prefer a slightly acidic to neutral soil (pH 6.8 - 7.0). The soil must have good drainage and air circulation. Raised beds or slopes are ideal. Water should never stand around the base of the plants. Clay soils can be built up easily using compost, leaf mold and/or peat moss. Be sure all are well composted. never use fresh manure.

HOW: The rhizomes should be planted at or barely below the surface of the soil, 12-18" apart.

- Build up a small mound of soil in the center of the planting hole.
- Center the rhizome on the soil mound and spread out the roots (downwards) on either side.
- Firm the soil around the roots to ensure there are no air pockets under the rhizome.



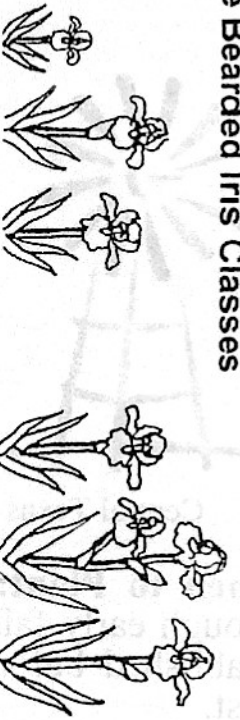
WATER: After planting, water well. Once established and during growing season, Irises should be watered when the top three inches of soil dry out. Irises are Very Drought Tolerant! During summer (July and August), irises go semi-dormant and do not need much water. As a rule of thumb, water less rather than more. Caution: Watering from overhead allows water to pool in the base of the plant and can induce rot.

FEEDING: Holiday Fertilize: Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Halloween. If you have re-bloomers, a feeding of Bone Meal in June (after spring bloom) will be beneficial. Never give irises a high nitrogen fertilizer (like lawn fertilizer). High nitrogen applications tend to cause bacterial rot and lush, but weak, foliage growth. We use a 10-20-10 mixture of fertilizer, alpha meal and superphosphate. A ratio of 4:1:1.

GENERAL CARE: Remove weeds around the plants to provide good air circulation. Cut spent bloom stalks. Remove old leaves when they pull away without resistance. Never cut back the leaves of established plantings. Needlessly trimming the foliage in the middle of the season actually breaks an iris's dormancy, kick starting foliar production. This can take away from root mass accumulation and even reserves meant to support flowering the next spring.

DIVIDING AND REPLANTING: Irises should be divided and replanted in late summer through early fall, every three to four years. Dig up the old clump, remove the soil, and cut back leaves to about six inches. Using a knife, cut off larger rhizomes from other sections. Cut the roots to about three inches in length. To ensure plant identification, use a black Sharpie marker to write the name of each plant on the leaf fan. Rinse away the soil with cool water. To destroy undesirable soil bacteria, soak rhizomes about 15 minutes in a mild solution of chlorine bleach (1/4 cup of bleach per gallon of water). Shake excess water from inside the leaves and dry thoroughly for at least two days in a cool place with good air circulation before planting.

The Bearded Iris Classes



MDB up to 8" (20 cm)
Miniature Dwarf Bearded
Earliest to Bloom

SDB 8-16" (21-40cm)
Standard Dwarf Bearded
Blooms Early Spring

IB 16-27.5" (41-70cm)
Intermediate Bearded
Blooms between
SDBs and TBs

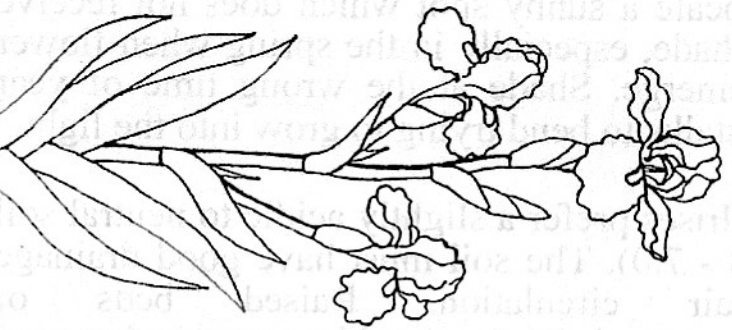
MTB 16-27.5" (41-70cm)
Miniature Tall Bearded
Blooms with TBs

BB 16-27.5" (41-70 cm)
Border Bearded
Blooms with TBs

TB more than 27.5" tall (71 cm)
Tall Bearded
Blooms mid to Late Spring

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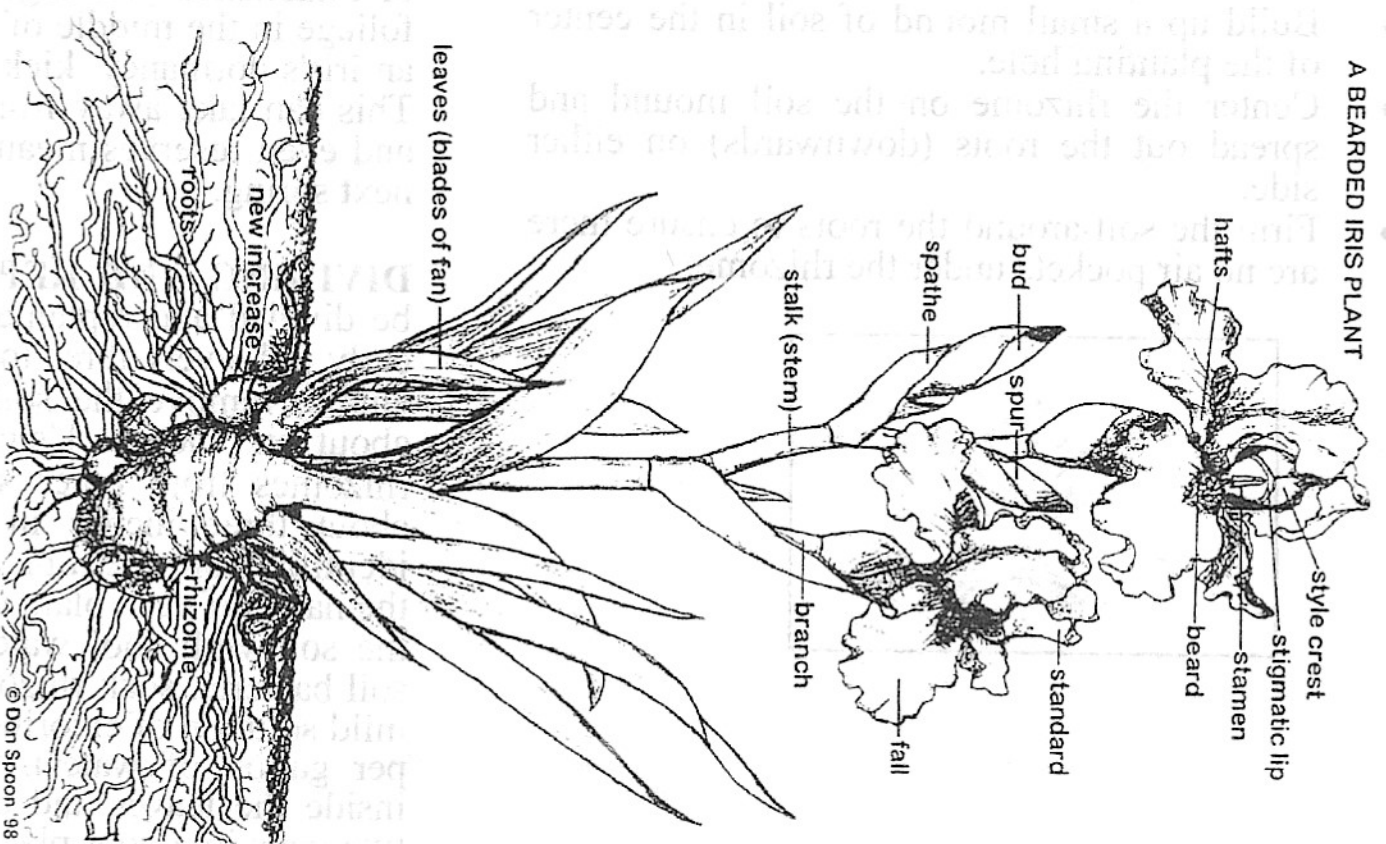
Height Ranges and Bloom Times



Please refer to the American Iris Society's (AIS) website www.irises.org for more information on the iris. You can go to the AIS IRIS ENCYCLOPEDIA (a wiki) for descriptions and pictures of the iris: <http://wiki.irises.org/>.

Enter "How to dig and divide iris" in the internet search menu for several Youtube presentations on how to dig, divide and plant your iris.

A BEARDED IRIS PLANT



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