



Tall Bearded Iris

Aspect

Full sun is best, but good bloom can still be obtained with half a day's sun. The heavier the shade the less likely they are to flower.

Climate

Best suited to dry summers and cold to frosty winters. If there is not enough cold then flowers are not initiated and blooming will be poor and on very short stems, even to being right down in the fan. (See State by State headings). High summer rainfall can cause problems with rot.

Soil type

Bearded Iris prefer a neutral to alkaline well-drained soil, but will grow in acidic soils. A friable, well-drained soil with sufficient nutrients to support growth is best.

When to plant

The best time to plant is immediately after flowering. That is November through till after the end of March. Later planting is acceptable, but the later they are planted, the lower percentage of bloom can be expected the following spring. The Iris experts who grow their Iris for showing have their planting completed by Christmas to give maximum growing time to give quality flower stems.

Replanting

The optimum length of time can vary according to climate and soil type. On a light sandy soil around Melbourne they are best replanted every year and again the people who show the blooms usually replant every year. In general garden conditions, two years on a light soil and 3 to 4 years on a heavier soil in a cooler climate should suffice for continual good blooming. An idea to assess the plants after two seasons and select those clumps that are really looking crowded, lift and divide them and the following year lift those remaining. This breaks up the work load and it keeps up a full display.

Depth of planting

Rhizomes need to be planted just at soil level. Make a mound of soil in a small hole, sit the rhizome on top of the mound so the roots hang into the hole, then cover the rhizome and roots with soil.

Distance apart

Planting 10-20cms apart will give you an established clump straight away, but planted further apart is also ok.

Cutting back foliage

Unless replanting, don't cut back the foliage in summer. This could result in a 15% reduction in flowering the following year. Just pull away dead foliage.

Fertilisers

At planting time a slow release, all purpose fertiliser is recommended. The important point about both of these is to ensure they are underneath the rhizomes and not scattered around the plants.

A side dressing in early spring of a rose fertiliser will improve flower quality and colour. Don't overuse animal manure and blood and bone (nitrogenous fertilisers) as this will promote soft growth and in turn rot and leaf spot and also poor flowering. Organic fertilisers are best used in autumn.