

Spuria Iris (SPU)

These irises display open, delicate blooms atop rugged 2' to 6' tall plants from June to mid-July. Spurias prefer a neutral to slightly alkaline soil but will grow well in all types of garden soil. Full sun will improve performance, as will regular applications of fertilizer in spring. They do not like wet feet making good drainage imperative. Spurias are great background plants and especially suited to outlying areas where they will stay dry throughout the summer.

When planting, cover the rhizomes with 2 inches of soil. Space plants at least 2 feet apart. Newly planted rhizomes need to be watered regularly until plants are established. In future years, the plants need water before bloom, but there is no need to water after blooming, although doing so won't hurt them. Summer dormancy is typical when water is withheld after bloom.

Spurias are heavy feeders. They are unique in that their new growth emerges in early fall once natural rainfall begins, so a balanced fertilizer should be applied in preparation for the fall rains. Another application of fertilizer in the spring when bloom stalks become apparent is recommended. Composted manure applied in spring will enhance growth. Do not expect peak performance until the second or third year. Spurias should be left alone for years, allowing the plants to grow into the large clumps for which they are noted.

Louisiana Irises (LA)

These irises begin blooming in late May and continue through mid-June with bloom stalks rising up 36" high. In their native habitat, they grow in boggy areas or in shallow water. In the Pacific Northwest they favor an acid soil, preferably in boggy areas with at least half a day of sun. If grown in shallow water, full sun is best. They can be grown in regular perennial beds, with additional water during the growing season. Be aware that under ideal growing conditions Louisiana irises can be quite robust in their growth habits.

Divide and plant Louisianas from August to mid-September to allow growth to be established before winter. Plants should be spaced at least 2 feet apart. Louisiana irises can travel quite a bit, with rhizomes extending several inches in a growing season. Plant rhizomes horizontally, covering them with about 2 inches of soil, pointing the growing tip in the direction you would like them to grow. Keep them well watered until established. They can be left in place 2 to 4 years without becoming overcrowded. As bog plants, Louisianas appreciate heavy quantities of organic matter (peat, compost or manure). As they are heavy feeders, an application of a balanced fertilizer is recommended in early spring and again after they bloom. A foliar feeding every 10 days, plus ample water, is helpful in short season areas like Seattle, to get vigorous, uninterrupted growth during the entire season. Mulch flower bed plants heavily before cold weather sets in.

King County Iris Society

**Beardless Iris
Japanese
Pacific Coast
Siberian
Spuria
Louisiana**



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Japanese Iris (JI)

These irises can begin blooming as early as mid-May and bloom into July. They prefer full sun and ordinary garden conditions, but require ample moisture, especially up to bloom time. They will do very well beside a stream or a pond but in cold climates they do not like to have their roots in water during the winter. Japanese irises prefer a heavy, rich soil with ample organic matter. The soil pH should be slightly acid, ideally between 5.0 to 6.5. They do not like lime, so do not plant close to cement, as lime leaches out of it.

Plant strong divisions of 2-3 fans. The roots should never dry out during transplanting. Plant the rhizome 1 to 2 inches deep, preferably in a 3-4 inch depression, which will catch and hold moisture. Since new roots form above the old ones, soil may be gradually added to fill in the depression over 3 years or so, to maintain plant vigor for a longer period of time. Keep division well watered after planting, until established.

Japanese irises are heavy feeders. A liberal application of a balanced fertilizer, such as 12-12-12, in the early spring and just after bloom is helpful.

Transplanting may be done from spring until fall but shortly after bloom time is best. This gives the new roots time to anchor the plant before winter freezes. A heavy 2 to 3 inch mulch is beneficial to conserve moisture and reduce weeds. If plants are set out in fall, mulch heavily before the winter.

Pacific Coast Iris (PCI/PCN)

These irises can be a challenge to get established, but are well worth the effort. During their first year in the garden, PCIs need a bit of extra TLC and coddling, and they may not show a lot of spirited growth. However, once established these irises tend to be quite hardy and fairly drought tolerant making them an excellent option for use in naturalized landscapes. They are sometimes used on slopes for soil retention. Here in the mild climate along the Pacific Coast they can be planted in full to part sun. In areas outside of Zone 8 conditions, partial shade may be best; winter protection may also be required.

They are best moved or divided in the early fall, when soil moisture is high and new white roots are evident. Plants can also be moved prior to spring bloom, although bloom will be weak. Transplants must be kept well watered until natural rainfall can maintain high soil moisture. They should be heavily mulched with bark dust, pine needles or leaves, to prevent frost damage to newly developing roots and fans. Once established, plants are fairly tolerant of normal freezes and periods of drought. If frost damage occurs to leaves, wait until well into spring to watch for signs of new growth.

PCI's will sprout readily from seed, but resulting plants rarely retain the flower pattern of their parent. Removal of seed pods once the bloom is complete is highly recommended to protect the genetic stability of your hybrid and strengthen the plant.

Siberian Iris (SIB)

Siberians are a hardy beardless iris growing from 2' to 6' in height. They typically begin blooming in mid-May and continue to bloom well into June. They are very effective in naturalized settings and mixed perennial beds. Siberians perform best in full sun, or with a minimum of 6 hours of full sun. Good drainage is critical. Siberians like year round moisture, but do not tolerate soggy conditions. They should be kept moist during spring. Fertilizing in early spring and again after bloom will encourage strong growth and good bloom.

Newly purchased or received Siberian rhizomes should be soaked in water overnight before planting. When planting, cover the rhizomes with 2-3 inches of soil; space plants about 2 feet apart. Siberians like acid soil, which may be enhanced with peat moss, compost or other humus. New plants should be kept well watered.

When the foliage dies back in the fall it should be cut off 3 to 4" inches above the ground and removed from the garden. Siberians need 2 to 3 years to become fully established; the first year's bloom is not representative of future bloom.

Note: *The information we have provided here is based on typical environments in the Pacific Northwest. However, the PNW is known for having many microclimates. Each microclimate may affect growth and bloom habits differently.*

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