

CARE OF YOUR IRISES

FERTILIZATION

Before you plant, you may work in fertilizer. We recommend Pro-Gro organic fertilizer. Be careful not to use something high in nitrogen, which makes plants susceptible to rot and will produce lots of growth, but few blooms.

PLANTING

Some people like to dip the rhizomes in a solution of 10% bleach and 90% water. Rinse in plain water after dipping. This will kill off bacteria that might cause soft rot.

- Don't plant the rhizome too deep. Just barely cover the top of the rhizome with dirt. Spread the roots out, firm the dirt around them, and water well. Plant rhizomes about 10"-18" apart.
- Plant in full sun, or in at least 6 or more hours of sun. Bearded irises don't like "wet feet", so provide a well-drained site, in raised beds, if necessary.
- Plant your new rhizomes as soon as possible. The sooner you get them back in the ground, the more likely they will bloom next year.

DIVIDING

About every four years, dig and divide the irises, discarding the old plants, and keeping just new, healthy, husky rhizomes. Early July is a good time to divide, as the baby rhizomes will have sized up nicely. Trim the fans in half, and replant, as above.

BORERS

If you grow irises in the Midwest, you will have borers, sooner or later. The most effective chemical is Imidacloprid (often listed under the brand name of Merit). It is a systemic insecticide which needs to be applied in early spring (when iris leaves are 4" tall) in order to get the chemical into the plant. We recommend a granular by Ferti-lome called Tree and Shrub Systemic Insect Granules, which is 2.5% Imidacloprid. A faster acting product is Ferti-lome's Tree and Shrub Systemic Insect Drench, which you might want to use if you don't get the irises treated early enough with the granules. We recommend 1/3 cup per gallon in a watering can and water well. We carry both products here at the Gardens.

SOFT ROT

In the spring, check for soft rot by pressing on the tops of the rhizomes. Scrape out any mushy areas with a spoon and expose the wound to the air. You could also pour a little 10% bleach solution on the wound. Clean off your spoon often with diluted bleach.

BROWN SPOT

Brown spot won't kill the rhizome, but can destroy the foliage. Spraying periodically with a broad-spectrum fungicide, especially during humid weather, will keep your foliage looking good.



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