

BEARDLESS IRIS CULTURE FOR JAPANESE IRISES

No other iris is influenced to as great a degree by culture as are the Japanese Iris. Good culture will increase height, branching, flower size and quantity and quality of bloom. No other factor will be a greater influence than water and its quality (pH and/or salts). A lack of moisture will stunt the plants and produce miniature blooms. An abundance of water and manure can produce five foot tall bloom stalks. JI need six hours of all sun to bloom properly. JI require ample moisture, especially up to bloom time. Never let the soil dry out. Depending on your soil, 1-2" of water and/or rain per week is recommended; older clumps will need more water than new divisions.

Japanese Iris prefer a rich soil with ample organic matter to help in water retention as well as adding nutrients. The soil pH should be slightly acid (5.0 to 6.5). Japanese Iris are heavy feeders. Depending on your soil, a liberal application of fertilizer in the spring and just before or after bloom is beneficial. The preparation of your iris bed with compost or manure will be a good start for your JI, but do not use granular fertilizer until they are established.

The rhizome should be planted 2-3 deep, depending on the heaviness of the soil. You can plant them in a depression which will help catch and hold more water, fill the depression with mulch. New roots grow from above the old roots each year, so by the time the crown grows to the surface and roots can be seen, it is time to dig and divide the plant. Plants under good culture require division every 3 to 4 years. Your best bloom will be on 2 and 3 year old clumps.

Japanese Iris can be transplanted almost anytime from spring until fall. Keep transplants well-watered until they are well established. DO NOT let the rhizomes or roots dry out during transplanting: soak in a bucket of water up to 48 hours. (Note: in freezing weather, plants should not be soaking wet enough for ice to form around the roots!)

We recommend heavy mulching year around: 2-3 inches. Remove the old foliage after the first frost with a serrated knife. Destroy the old foliage which may contain borer eggs or foliage thrips.