



You can enjoy iris in containers.



Larger container makes a great statement.

Part One: Container Gardening

Did you come back from your local iris sale with more iris than you have room for in your garden, or are you a container gardener already?

Are you looking for a temporary home for your iris until you get beds prepared, or would you like to have a few larger containers filled with iris as specimen plantings anchoring walkways or patios?

No matter the reason, growing iris in containers is easy. Here are some tips, tricks, and traps for growing iris in containers.

First you need to consider what the size of your containers will be. You may have locations that allow for very large containers, or you may be restricted by space or even funding. Large decorative containers can be expensive, and then you need to add soil to them which is another expense. Speaking from experience, I know that iris can be grown in containers from one gallon in size to the very large ones. So do not be afraid of using smaller ones, especially if you are using them for temporary homes.

Although I have successfully used one gallon nursery pots, my preferred size for temporary homes are the three-gallon nursery pots as they provide space for the iris to increase and will allow plants to bloom over a two-to-three-year period if you want to keep them in the containers that long. Realize that the nursery pots have drain holes, and they will need routine watering—daily during the

summer. If you provide a basin under the pots that will hold some water, the iris will thank you, but they will still need daily watering during the summer.

I currently live in South Carolina near the coast and do not have to worry much about winter weather. Prior to moving here I lived in Virginia, with snow, ice, and freezing weather during the winter. My potted iris remained outside all year round. They did fine, but if you live in an even colder climate area you may consider locating the pots to an area where you can mulch around them. You do not have to worry about them being covered with snow, but if you are having a long dry spell during the winter you should water them. Also, if you have basins under the pots, you should probably remove them for the winter.

Don't overlook the opportunity to use a large container if you have a place for one or more. I have used them with one variety of iris with a number of rhizomes to get a nice potted clump effect. I have also used them for a number of different varieties to include smaller dwarf iris along the outer edges and the taller iris in the center. And consider various types: Siberian, Louisiana, or Japanese would make great choices. For those of you who can grow Pacific natives, larger pots would make great showcases for them.

In part two I will talk about soil for containers, so come back again.

