

**Container grown irises purchased at the nursery:** We suggest that you grow these plants in the container until roots begin to show through the holes in the bottom of the container and that you remove the flower stalks after bloom. Ample water is your best insurance for success. Follow the directions below for planting out in the garden.

## CULTURE - 2014

**JAPANESE IRIS:** No other iris is influenced to as great a degree by culture as are the Japanese irises. Plant your bare root irises as soon as possible following these instructions. Upon arrival soak the roots in water for several hours to overnight before planting and keep them in a cool spot while they recover from their trip to your garden. New root growth will not occur when temperatures are above 90°. They must be grown in a rich, acid soil (pH 5.0-6.5) which is high in organic matter. Lime is fatal to Japanese Irises.

**Where:** Plant where they will receive at least 3 hr. of direct sun each day. Full sun (at least 6 hr. of direct sun) is best except in very hot climates where they will need some afternoon shade. They prefer a rich, acid garden soil with plenty of organic matter. Japanese irises do very well planted on the bank of a stream or pond but do not like to have their roots standing in water during the winter.

**When:** Spring planting is preferable in the northeast (zone 5 and north). Fall is the best time to plant in hot and dry climates.

**How:** Set the plants 18"-24" apart with the crowns no less than 2" below the soil surface. Place the rhizome on a mound of soil in the hole dug for it in order to insure that there is no air pocket beneath the rhizome. The roots can be spread downward over the mound (see illustration), the soil replaced and the plant well watered. The plant should be watered daily for a few weeks and then receive 2" of water or rain per week until it is fully established.

**Fertilizing:** In early spring & again right after bloom fertilize with a balanced fertilizer such as 10-10-10, Hollytone or PRO GRO.

**Cultivation:** Keep plants free of weeds. Mulching helps to conserve moisture as well as hold back the weeds and keep the soil cool. If you are not saving seed, the flower stalks can be removed after bloom to encourage the iris to express itself in rhizome increase. When foliage dies back in the fall, it should be cut off and removed to the dump or burned thus killing over-wintering insect eggs and disease. For winter protection in zone 5 and north mulch the crowns of the plants with straw or pine needles after the soil freezes.

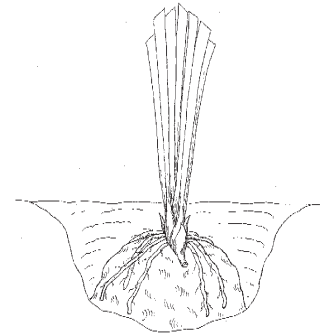
**Diseases and Pests:** The common pest of Japanese iris foliage is *Bregmatothrips iridis thrips*. The thrip lays its eggs in the fall. The eggs hatch early in the spring. Immature thrips are white, adults (1/10" long) are brown or black. Both stages can be seen together hiding in the folds of leaves. Here they rasp the surface of the inner folds, causing a rust-coloring of the foliage. Thrips can be controlled by spraying with a systemic (Isotox or Orthene) when the foliage is 2"-4" high. **Good fall cleanup** is essential because the eggs of these pests over-winter in iris seedpods, flower stalks, foliage and organic debris around the plants. The only disease apt to occur is botrytis. It is controlled with a fungicide (Domain or Banrot).

**Transplanting:** If the flowers start to decline in amount and/or size after 3-4 years, it is best to dig up the clump, discard weak rhizomes, wash the roots, divide and replant vigorous 2-4 fan divisions. Japanese irises must be moved to a site that has not previously grown Japanese Irises OR they must be dug up, the soil around the root zone removed and replaced with fresh soil and/or compost. Cut the foliage back to 6" - 8" at this time.

**SIBERIAN IRIS:** The 28-chromosome (subseries Sibiricae) diploids and the tetraploids derived from them are among the easiest perennial plants to grow but **until they are well established, they must be kept moist**. Please refer to the culture notes for Japanese irises except as noted here.

**Cultivation:** Although siberians are quite forgiving, they prefer a rich, acid garden soil with plenty of organic matter. In zone 5 and north provide a thick, 8" mulch (after the soil freezes) their first winter in your garden or when transplanted late in the season. **How:** Set the plants 15"-18" on center with the crown 1½" - 2" below the soil surface.

**Diseases and Pests:** The two major pests of siberian iris are iris borer and iris bud fly. Iris borers are the larva of the moth, *Macronocuta onusta*, a brownish night-flying moth. In the fall the moth lays its eggs on iris and other garden debris where they over-winter. In the spring tiny larva (.10"-.25") emerge. They are white-pink with a brown head. The borer makes slender feeding channels into new foliage. It continues to grow while eating its way down the foliage arriving at the rhizome in late summer, the perfect time to pupate and begin the cycle. Borers can be controlled by hand picking or by spraying with a systemic (Isotox or Orthene) when the foliage is 2"-4" high. We have had good success using parasitic nematodes as an organic method for borer control. The bud fly, *Orthochaeta dissimilis*, lays its eggs inside the flower buds. Its larva, a ½" long white maggot with two black spots on the non-head end, invade the developing iris flower bud. It prefers pollen but eats through style arms and standards as well. The larva favors siberian iris but can attack other iris species whose flowers open after siberians bloom. When the open flower reveals bud fly damage, the falls are intact but the flower is disfigured. Disfigurement indicates that the maggot has already eaten its way out of the first site and moved on to the next bud down in the spathe. When you see a small hole in the side of a bud, remove the bud, open it carefully, look for and destroy the maggot. Search your plants for damaged flowers and for holes in buds. Destroy all maggots. You may choose to spray the remaining healthy buds with a systemic (Isotox or Orthene) as a preventative measure. Some gardeners spray the first buds on the siberians before they open.



Method of planting, with crown properly below ground level  
*The Siberian Iris*, Timber Press.