

Bearded Iris



Bearded Iris are named for the very prominent flower petal that drops below the rest of the flower. Apparently, many admirers think it looks like a beard. These wonderful tubers come in a wide range of colors since they have been hybridized. If you are fond of a particular color you can probably find a bearded iris that comes in the color. In this gardener's opinion the strongest and most vibrant are the blues—either solid color or bicolor. I found the three blue varieties shown here growing abandoned in cow pastures. Since the ranches they were on had been abandoned a long time, it shows how hardy these are.

The trick to getting your irises to bloom is that the top of the rhizome needs to be showing above the ground. (They only bloom once a year—in the spring—so you don't want to miss it!) It seems like you haven't finished planting but most will not flower with the rhizome completely covered. The distinctive fan shaped foliage of irises makes them an interesting shape for the garden but be warned, a happy iris will spread prolifically.

Plant these beauties in 6 to 8 hours of sun though anything you plant in south central Texas appreciates a little afternoon shade. They will bloom in part shade with a minimum of 4 hours of sun. Plant in early spring or in the fall. Well-drained soil is preferred. Irises are very drought tolerant but they need a good soaking here in Texas about once a week. Do not let them stand in wet soil. The rhizomes rot. Fertilizing depends on your soil. They will grow in any soil pH but the higher the pH, the more fertilizer they need.