

IRIS



Iris, is a popular plant with large beautifully colored flowers. The name iris comes from the Greek word rainbow. The unusual shape of the iris sets it apart from other flowers and makes it easy to recognize. It has three sets of three petal-like parts. The lower set called, the falls, flares out and hangs down. The upper segments curve up and into a dome. They are known as standards. Three curved style branches cover the stamens in the center.

The colors range through all shades. They appear in many combinations. The plant may grow from 6 inches (15 centimeters) to over 6 feet (2meters) tall. The flowers vary from 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) to over 1 foot (30 centimeters) across. The leaves rise directly from rhizomes (under-ground stems). Some iris rhizomes contain a poison and eating them can cause severe stomach to upset.

Irises grow throughout the temperature regions. These perennial plants bloom from April through July. They may need to be planted in spring before blooming, or in autumn. The plants with rhizomes give the best flowers if they are replanted about every four years. The most common garden irises are the tall bearded varieties. There are thousands of different kinds. The iris needs sun and average soil. The bearded iris also needs well-drained soil, but beardless iris does well in moist soil.

The worst insect enemy of the iris is the borer. Its larvae eat their way through the leaves and roots, and often cause soft rot. This causes the leaves to turn yellow and the root to rot. Soft rot often follows winter injury to the plant. When either trouble occurs, the plant should be dug up and the roots cleaned before replanting in fresh soil. Old plantings must be dug and cleaned to get rid of borers.

The dried rhizome of certain bearded irises is called orrisroot. It is used in perfumes, powders, and medicines. Iris growing has become an important specialty. The American Iris Society has promoted this work in the United States. The iris in the state flower of Tennessee.

Fleur-de lis is a name sometimes used for the iris. It is French for flower of the lily. Fleur de-lis is also the name of a design that represents the white iris. It appeared as an emblem on the scepter of Egyptian rulers in 1500 B.C. and was carved on the brow of the Sphinx. It also became the emblem of the kings of France in the 1100's King Charles V of France adopted three golden fleur -de-lis id a blue field ad his coat of arms in the 1300's. The design is also a symbol for the North on the compass. Irises make up the iris family Iridaceae.

REDBUD



Redbud trees are small, ornamental trees that are favorites in Texas gardens. Their beautiful lilac colored flowers bloom in early spring and stay on trees for a good long time, giving the landscape a beautiful flowery feel.

Three varieties are adapted to Texas gardens- and each has a specific range. Be sure to select the variety that is appropriate for your part of the state.

Eastern Redbud has large, dull green leaves, sometimes up to 5 inches long and wide. Eastern Redbud sometimes reaches as tall as 40 feet. It grows in east Texas where there is ample rain and sandy soils. It also will thrive in heavy black clay soil of the Blackland Prairie.

Mexican Redbud is a smaller tree that reaches about 25 feet in height. Its leaves are heart shaped with wavy edges. It often grows as a multitrunked tree and is sometimes found in the edge of the Trans-Pecos on alkaline soil. In its native range, it gets 12-20 inches of rain per year.

The Texas Redbud is another smaller tree, often with multi-trunks. It grows in the thin, limestone soils of central Texas and the Hill Country. Its leaves are thicker, smaller and glossier than those of the Eastern Redbud. This variety is very drought-tolerant and adapted to areas of little rain.

All varieties are easy to grow and rarely bothered by pests. The flowers bloom on bare branches and are replaced by leaves. Seed pods develop in the late summer and sometimes stay on the trees through the winter.

In Mexico, the flowers are pickled and used in salads. The seeds provide forage for wildlife. Redbud will grow as an understory tree when the taller trees are deciduous to allow for sunlight in the early bloom season.

It is possible to grow redbud trees from seed. Gather the seed in late August. They are hard-shelled and must be treated before planting. Some scarify with sulfuric acid, others with boiling water. Experiment with soaking in seaweed to encourage sprouting.

ARBOR DAY IS APRIL 27TH!!!!

Plant a tree in honor of our earth and improve yours and your neighbor's quality of life.

GET YOUR GOURD SEEDS AT MIKE'S GARDEN CENTERS!!!

Fascinating Facts About Gourds

- A gourd is a fruit that is a member of the same plant family as watermelons, melon, and pumpkins.
- The Malabar gourd is found in Asia and has vines that grow to be 825 feet long!
- Snake cucumber gourd vines have been known to grow 40 feet in length.
- The Incas of South America used gourds as trumpets.
- In Haiti, gourds were once used as money!
- Ancient Hawaiians chose a large-bellied man to plant gourd seeds each year.
- In India, gourd seeds were believed to cure headaches.
- In ancient Rome, gourds were used to treat toothaches and even corns!
- Native American tribes including the Cherokee and Hopi, used ceremonial masks made of gourds.



A FUN FACT

Birds love gourd birdhouses because the gourd's natural insulation keeps the house warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It's like having a furnace in the winter and an air-conditioner in the summer.

RADISHES



One of the fastest and easiest to grow vegetables, radishes are a great addition to any garden and a wonderful veggie to grow with children. Plant them early and feed them well and you'll have some crunchy nibbles ready to eat in no time.

Most of us are familiar with the round red radishes that are common in most gardens, but there are a wider range of radishes that are used in cooking and for a variety of purposes. Popular in oriental style cooking, radishes range in size

from the tiny to the huge. Many heirloom varieties are available for the adventurous gardener who wants to experiment.

Grouped under Brassicaceae, radishes are relative of cabbage, broccoli, turnips, and cress. All of these vegetables require cool weather to grow best. By the time the weather gets really hot, pull out the radishes and put them in the compost heap. They are short-lived annuals and should be grown quickly and consumed enthusiastically.

A native of Asia, the radish has been found around for a very long time, Ancient Greeks grew radishes in their gardens and shared them with Egypt, India, and other parts of the world. Galen of Pergamon (A.D.129-1999) wrote the radishes were eaten raw with salt and vinegar and that the poor cooked the stems and the leaves. The radish was considered an important medical plant and was recommended to treat colds and prevent scurvy. We know that it is high in vitamin C.

Plant your radish seeds in well drained, enriched garden soil. Plant a few every week so all won't be ready to pick at the same time. Feed with seaweed and fish blend or other organic fertilizer and keep evenly moist. Harvest while the radish is young or it will be tough, pithy or too hot. Leave a few to go to seed. Pollinators like flowers and you can save the seed for the fall garden. The seed pods can also be picked and enjoyed as an unusual condiment or garnish.

APRIL CHECKLIST



- Finish warm season vegetable plantings including melons, okra, southern peas, corn, squash, beans, cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes.
- Plant warm season flowers including periwinkles, cosmos, potulaca, copper leaf, marigolds, zinnias, lantana, caladiums, coleus, begonias, impatiens, and nicotiana. Plant roses form 2 gallon and larger containers.
- Plant trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers.
- Turfgrasses to be planted now include St. Augustine, zoysia, buffalo grass, Bermuda and hybrid bermudas.
- Prick-prune hedges to be wider at the bottom fir better light thicker growth.
- Fertilize summer-flowering shrubs and apply foliar fertilizers on all foliage. Apply root stimulator to newly planted trees and shrubs. Fertile shade trees, evergreen shrubs, and ground covers, with high nitrogen plant food. Use high-phosphate plant food for flowering and fruiting plants. Feed roses with specialty rose food, monthly.
- Apply diatomaceous earth for snails, slugs, pill bugs, ticks, fleas and chiggers
- Continue fruit sprayings at ten-day intervals.
- Mow weekly and leave clippings on the lawn.

- Repot overgrown houseplants using light-weight highly organic potting soil. Use next larger pot size, making sure it has a drain hole. Loosen outer roots in the soil ball as you repot.
- Trim leggy or stringy houseplants back by as much as 50 to 80%. Then place in adequate light to encourage regrowth.
- Remove lower limbs on shade trees to allow more sunlight to get to the lawn.