

## Gardener Favors Iris "The Perennial Supreme"

**Editor's Note:**  
Noted for his beautiful garden, and Richmond Hill's poet laureate, R. D. "Bob" Little of Arnold Crescent has contributed the fourth in a series on gardening for the home gardener — a project of Richmond Hill Horticultural Society.

**BY R. D. LITTLE**  
To the many fanciers of other flowers the above title may sound a bit presumptive, but there has been such great progress made in the last ten years in the iris species that they now are rivaling the orchid for profuse and beautiful bloom. We therefore will endeavor in this article to give some pointers to those interested in growing this beautiful flower.

**Time to Plant** — After the plants have bloomed — from last July to September, this is also the best time to reset old clumps that have become crowded. With those of fast increase, this should be done every three or four years. Discard the old centres when replanting and place about three rhizomes in a clump, toes pointing inward, roots outward.

**Depth and Distance** — Plant rhizomes in a circle with about one inch of soil covering the roots — not too deep — tramp ground down firmly. Water frequently in dry weather. The ideal distance of clumps is eight inches to two feet apart, depending on space available.

**Where to Plant** — The ideal location for irises is a sunny well-drained position. The bed might be raised slightly above the surrounding level, as iris need at least half a day for sun. A full day is better.

**Soil Preparation** — For new plantings, work the soil to a depth of 10 to 12 inches. If the soil is heavy clay, incorporate sand or compost. They do not like acid soil, but lime should be added only if the soil is acid.

**Fertilizer** — Irises will grow well in any good garden soil, but if you want special show specimens, extra food is desirable. For a new planting, a balanced chemical mixed with compost or well rotted manure is good. Manure should be about six to eight inches deep so newly planted roots will not touch it. Never pile manure around the rhizomes. Fertilizers high in nitrogen should be avoided. Example of suitable fertilizer — nitrogen 5 (leaf growth), phosphate 10 (root growth), potash 10 (bloom and structure).

**Cultivation** — Cultivate irises shallowly as the feeding roots are very near the surface. Keep free of weeds and do not allow neighboring plants to encroach. They need sunshine right down to the rhizomes. You will notice that iris rhizomes rise to the top of the soil so as to get the sunshine, so never plant too deep as they will not bloom to best advantage.

**General Garden Care** — There should be a certain amount of bloom the first year after transplanting, but the best blooms will occur from the second to the fourth year. Some varieties increase and bloom much better than others. Iris growing is a big business in the United States — the Cooley and Schreiner's gardens occupy about ten acres — and each of these companies usually introduce five or six new varieties a year at \$25 per rhizome. My experience has shown that some of these new varieties do not grow or bloom as well as some of those that have been around for a long time, so do not hurry to buy them until they have been proven. I usually wait for bargain counter specials.

**Care** — Unless leaf spot is very bad, do not cut the leaves down until fall, for, like the tulip, the iris is storing up nourishment for next year's bloom. Leaf spot is unsightly, but it does not really affect the plant and there will be no permanent damage if not cut off.

**Pests** — One of the main pests is the iris borer, and it can cause damage. It first appears as small holes and tunnels in the leaves, and you can detect a sticky substance. The borer goes down through the leaf and enters

the rhizome and stays for many a meal. If you are not squeamish just put on a pair of gloves and draw finger and thumb up the leaf where you suspect the borer has started. Systematic spray is also effective, but it takes longer. The plant absorbs the mixture and carries the insecticide in the sap stream to all parts of the plant. The eggs of this pest are laid in the fall by the adult moth — usually in old refuse or in soil near the plants. That is why it is necessary to burn all the debris and old leaves in the spring.

It is well to cover first year plants in the late fall. Use excelsior and heap soil around them on top of the excelsior. The second year they should be OK.

**Preferred Varieties** — Not very new, and not old, but good growers and bloomers, moderate prices: Plicatas: Stepping Out, Dancer's Veil, High Life and Memphis Lass. Blacks: Sable Night, Tuxedo, Allegiance. Reds: Bermuda High, Gypsy Jewels, Pinks: Esther Fay, One Desire, Happy Birthday. Light Blues: Blue Sapphire, Babbling Brook, Symphony. Dark Blues or Violet: Royal Touch, First Violet. Yellows: Teehny Chimes, Sunny Splendor, Garden Gold. Whites: Celestial Snow, Piety, New Snow.

## Daffodil And Tulip Horticultural Show

Richmond Hill Horticultural societies since 1928 — show of the year, "Daffodil and Tulip" on May 14, and so many beautiful blooms were on display it made judging a hard task.

The judge, Mrs. Margaret Arlow of Nobleton, has been a member of two horticultural societies since 1923 — 33 years at Woodbridge, and 13 at Nobleton.

She remarked on the very good quality of flowers on display and thought credit should be given to the Year Book committee on a splendid edition. Mrs. Freeman Barker gave some interesting advice on growing plants.

Convenor of the show was Ted Watts. Winners were: specimens, Wes Ankeman, 30 points; Otto Connor, 22 points; Mrs. Marje Olsen, 13 points; arrangements Mrs. George Barker, eight points, Mrs. Marg Rummy, Rezin Steele and Mrs. Vivian Hart tied at three points each.

In the "Court of Honor" were Wes Ankeman, specimens, and Rezin Steele, arrangements. Winners in the novice class were Mrs. Margaret Ryan first, Mrs. Sadie Lucas second and Mrs. Anne Thurlert third.

The speaker, George Blais, sales development manager for CIL, was introduced by Miss Gladys McLatchy. His topic was "Insecticides"

Mr. Blais has been connected with the agricultural chemical division of his company for some time and gave a great deal of information on research and introduction of new products by the company. He advised his audience to always carefully read directions on labels. Door prizes were several CIL products. Mrs. Zelma Ross thanked the speaker.

Visitors from Nobleton were welcomed, and refreshments were served to the 70 people present by Mrs. Hart and her committee. The "Bring and Buy" table was very successful.

Future events for the society are the iris and peony show on June 11 and the garden party on July 13.

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Tankard Restaurant, Bayview Avenue and North Wilcox Road, Town of Richmond Hill.

Any person who is resident in the licensing district may object to the application, and the grounds of objection in writing shall be filed with Mr. H. J. Browne (Acting) the deputy registrar of the licensing district, whose address is 55 Lakeshore Boulevard East, Toronto, Ontario, M5E 1A4 at least ten days before the meeting at which the application is to be heard.

DATED at Toronto this 23rd day of May, 1974.

JANET WOOLARD,  
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