



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Iris virginica*<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

Blue Flag Iris has wonderfully-textured, light-green foliage emerging directly from the ground in dense clumps (Fig. 1). It grows 12- to 18-inches-tall producing lavender-blue flowers about 4 inches across in the spring. Flowers are displayed in a showy fashion slightly above the foliage. They are native to boggy areas where water stands all year long. They will grow in standing water.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Iris virginica*

**Pronunciation:** EYE-riss vur-JIN-nick-uh

**Common name(s):** Blue-Flag, Blue-Flag Iris

**Family:** *Iridaceae*

**Plant type:** herbaceous; ornamental grass; aquatic plant

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; water garden; accent

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

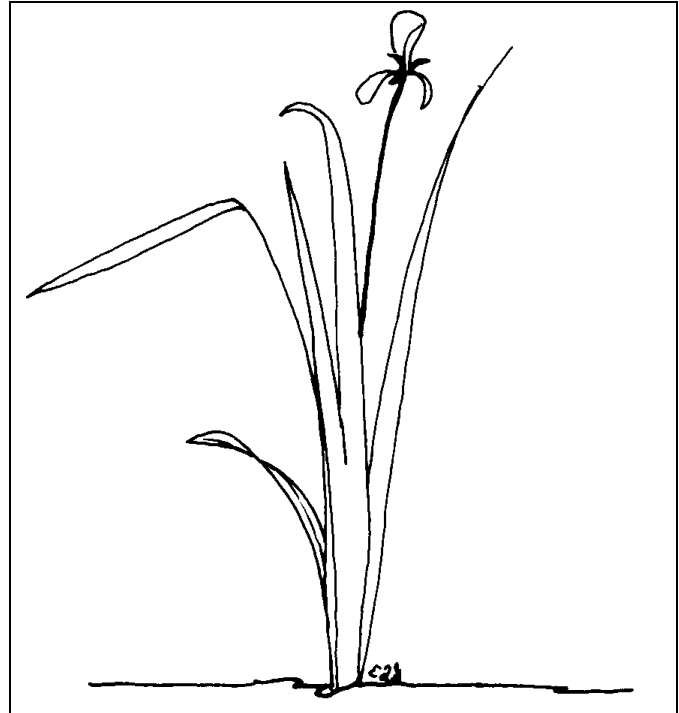


Figure 1. Blue-Flag.

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

### Description

**Height:** 4 to 7 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 3 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

### Foliage

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-288, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** linear

**Leaf venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** blue

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** green

**Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

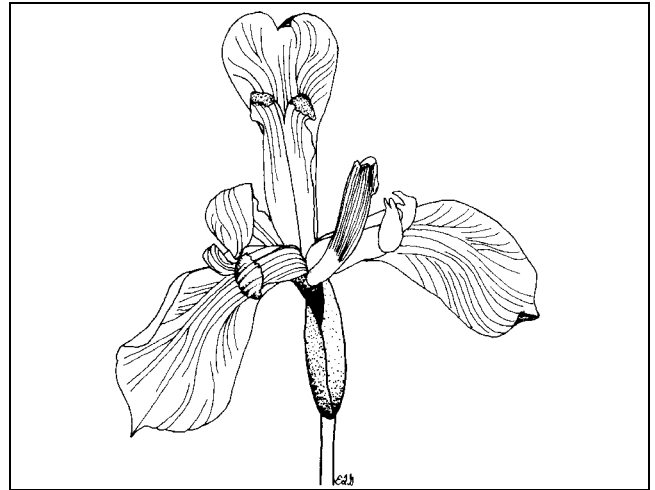
## Use and Management

The plant is grown and used for its foliage effect as well as the flower display. The plant flowers for a short period in the spring but the coarse-textured, upright foliage makes this a year-round favorite for a wet garden spot. It is well suited for planting in mass in front of a shrub border, or as a tall ground cover. On 2-foot-centers, a thick ground cover can be formed in about 2 years. The individual plants will be nearly indistinguishable by that time.

Although full sun is tolerated if soils stay moist, a well drained, partially shaded location provides the best habitat for Iris. Plants can be allowed to dry out slightly in a shaded location with little damage to foliage or flowers. As with other Irises, overfertilization will encourage foliage growth at the expense of flowers. A light application once each year should be enough to maintain good growth and a reliable flower display.

### Pests and Diseases

No major pest or diseases problems are usually encountered on this Iris.



**Figure 3.** Flower of Blue-Flag