**Iris virginica**

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**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.

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**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

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**Description**

**Height:** 4 to 7 feet  
**Spread:** 1 to 3 feet  
**Plant habit:** upright

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**Foliage**

Plant density: moderate  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: coarse
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-feet-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.