



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Iris tectorum*¹

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Introduction

Japanese Roof Iris has wonderfully-textured, light-green foliage emerging directly from the ground in dense clumps (Fig. 1). It is closely related to the native Crested Iris. It grows 12 to 18-inches-tall producing blue flowers in the spring. Flowers are displayed in a showy fashion within the clump of foliage.

General Information

Scientific name: *Iris tectorum*

Pronunciation: EYE-riss teck-TOR-um

Common name(s): Japanese Roof Iris

Family: *Iridaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; mass planting; ground cover; edging

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



Figure 1. Japanese Roof Iris.

Texture: coarse

Foliage

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

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Description

Height: 1 to 1.5 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
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: acidic; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
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. Many people may not notice the flowers nestled within the foliage clumps, but it is hard to miss the coarse-textured foliage. It is well suited for planting in mass in front of a shrub border, or as a ground cover. On 2-foot-centers, a thick ground cover can be formed in about 2 years.

Although full sun is tolerated if soils stay moist, a well drained, partially shaded location provides the best habitat for Japanese Roof Iris. Plants can be allowed to dry out 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.