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Contributed by Trish Reynolds

THE BEAUTY OF IRIS

Each spring we revel with the beauty of Daffodils, first appearing in late March-April.....then we move on to Tulip time in April-May; Peony and Iris time in May....how lucky we are!

My "love affair" with Iris began with my GrandmotherI can still remember the sweet scented early blossoms of her pale lavender Iris blooming in our garden on Long Island. And when we move to Maryland when I was 16, she brought some of those precious rhizomes and planted them here in Oxford....and when we built our home in 1993, I brought them with me....what a treasure, what a beautiful memory.

Here a few, perhaps little known, facts about IrisThe Iris is represented in Greek mythology...."Iris" was the goddess of the rainbow and a messenger for Zeus and Hera, and many believe that the flower is named after her.

Iris commonly means wisdom, hope, trust and valor and can be found in a variety of temperate zones around the world. In the 16th century BC Irises were introduced to Egypt from Syria and stylized versions of these flowers began to appear on the scepters of the pharaohs as representations of victory and power. It is also said that Iris inspires the fleur-de-lis, a decorative symbol used by French royalty.

The colors of Iris over the centuries have certain cultural significance or symbolisms:

- Purple irises symbolize royalty and wisdom
- Yellow Irises symbolize passion
- Blue Irises symbolize faith and hope
- White Irises symbolize purity.

The beauty of Irises has inspired many artists....one of the most notable is Vincent Van Gogh's *Irises*.



Siberian Iris - Trish's garden

There are over 200 different varieties of Irises....and can range in size from 8" to 48". We are most familiar with German or Bearded Iris, Dutch Iris, Japanese Iris, Siberian Iris, Louisiana Iris, Yellow and Blue Flag Iris to name but a few. I have all of these growing in my garden, plus the tiny *Reticulata* Iris that blooms for me in late March.



Blue Flag Iris - Trish's



A few Irises blooming in Trish's Garden

If you are growing Iris you probably know all these, but for a novice Iris grower here are some cultural things for you to know:

- Soil – well drained, neutral pH
- Location – full sun to partial shade – at least 5 hours of sun/day
- Moisture – allow soil to dry between watering – soggy soil leads to Iris rot
- Divide – every 4-5 years in August
- Plant in July – Sept.....plant with rhizome's top slightly exposed or barely under the soil with roots spread out facing downward in the soil.

“With its great diversity of colors and meanings, Irises are great gifts for all types of people in your life. You can give purple irises to a parent or a mentor, yellow iris to a significant other, and blue irises to someone who needs a little extra encouragement.”

Sources:

www.ftd.com/blog

Darlene Newell – Instructor FSS IV, 2021