**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

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**Figure 1.** Japanese roof iris.  
**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Iris tectorum Japanese Roof Iris

**Description**

Height: 1 to 1.5 feet  
Spread: 2 to 3 feet  
Plant habit: upright  
Plant density: moderate  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: coarse

**Foliage**

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: 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.