**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 vir-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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![Figure 1. Blue flag iris](image1)

![Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.](image2)
Iris virginica Blue Flag, Blue Flag Iris

**Description**

Height: 4 to 7 feet
Spread: 1 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: 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

**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, over-fertilization 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.