Neomarica spp. Walking Iris

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Introduction

Neomarica is a clumping herbaceous perennial that reaches a height of 18 to 36 inches (Fig. 1). The walking iris is a fairly durable plant that bears attractive, light green leaves and small iris-like yellow flowers periodically during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. The flowers are short lived, but provide enough color to be interesting.

General Information

Scientific name: Neomarica spp.
Pronunciation: nee-oh-MAR-ick-kuh species
Common name(s): walking iris, twelve apostles
Family: Iridaceae
Plant type: herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; edging; mass planting
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

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

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire

Figure 1. Walking iris

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**
Flower color: white; yellow
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; spring flowering; fall 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: 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; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

**Other**
Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**
The walking iris is quite lovely when massed together in the shade. The upright foliage combines with the occasional flower to strike a bold pose in the landscape.

Place walking iris in an area of the landscape that receives partial to full shade. It is tolerant of a wide range of moist soils but will not endure drought conditions. It is best to err on the wet side. This perennial is frozen to the ground in the winter but will reappear in the spring.

*Neomarica caerulea* has blue flowers; *Neomarica gracilis* has white flowers with blue margins; *Neomarica longifolia* has yellow flowers with brown/mahogany splotches on the petals; *Neomarica northiana* has yellow flowers.

The walking iris may be grown from seed or divisions. They also propagate themselves through plantlets that form at the tips of the flower stalks; the flower stalks bend to the ground, and then take root.

**Pests and Diseases**
No pests or diseases are of major concern.