

Neomarica spp. Walking Iris¹

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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.



Figure 1. Walking iris

General Information

Scientific name: *Neomarica* spp.

Pronunciation: nee-oh-MAR-rick-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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

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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.