

Dwarf Crested Iris *Iris cristata* v. Tennessee White

Plant Type: Native Perennial
Sun Exposure: Part Sun, Shade
Season of Interest: Spring, Summer, Fall
Bloom Time: Spring
Bloom Color: White
Height: 6 to 9 in.
Spread: 12 in.
Spacing: 15 in.
Water Needs: Average
Maintenance: Very Little
Soil Type: Loam, Sandy
Soil pH: Acidic, Neutral
Soil Drainage: Well Drained
Pests: Highly Rabbit and Deer resistant
Diseases: None
Wildlife: Bees, Butterflies, Hummingbirds



Description: The "Tennessee White" cultivar of the dwarf crested iris has stunning white flowers with yellow-crested falls, rather than the typical blue color, and is a bright addition to shady areas. This diminutive mat-forming iris was first introduced by Don Shadow, a plant collector, breeder, and nurseryman who lived in Winchester, TN. This variety has sterile flowers that produce no viable seeds; it only spreads by rhizomes. The distinctive foliage soon forms a lovely groundcover. In spring plants carpet the ground with myriads of brilliant white irises. This spring beauty prospers in woodland settings with average well drained soils. These plants are typically found growing on rocky wooded slopes, calcareous woodlands, ravines, creek and stream banks, slopes of floodplain forests, and on shaded bluffs and ledges. Short sword shaped leaves arise from the rhizomes. They are gray-green or bluish. Leaves overlap at the base and fold around the adjacent leaf to form a flat fan-like arrangement. The blades tips bend in a delicate arch. In mid-spring masses of small bright white blossoms appear. The blooms have a typical iris form with 3 drooping sepals called "falls" and 3 small upright petals called "standards". The falls are marked with a yellow splotch or signal that surrounds three parallel orange ridges called a crest. For more information see: plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/iris-cristata



Care and Growing Tips: The crested iris grows best in partly shaded or shaded sites with rich well drained soil. Plants will tolerate more sun if soil is consistently moist. This iris tolerates alkaline soil, rocky soil and dry shade. It is pest resistant except for occasional problems with snails and slugs. Foliage is unpalatable to deer and other herbivores.

In garden situations, these plants benefit from the addition of rich compost or mulch. Lime is also welcome if woodland soils are strongly acidic. Plants can be divided every 3 to 4 years in fall if they become too crowded.