

Southern Blue-Flag Iris

Iris virginica

Plant Type: Native Perennial
Sun Exposure: Sun, Part Shade
Season of Interest: Spring, Early Summer
Bloom Time: Spring, Early Summer
Bloom Color: Bright Blue, Lavender
Height: 18 to 24 in.
Spread: 12 in.
Spacing: 15 in.
Water Needs: High
Maintenance: Very Little
Soil Type: Clay, Loam, Sandy
Soil pH: Acidic (pH < 6.0)
Soil Drainage: Medium to Soggy
Pests: Highly Rabbit and Deer resistant
Diseases: None
Wildlife: Bees, Butterflies, Hummingbirds



Description: Southern blue flag (*Iris virginica* v. *shrevei*) is a member of the iris family, most often seen growing in the wild in wetlands and along shorelines rather than in home gardens. This is a shame because home gardeners find this plant easy and attractive to grow, especially along the margins of water features.

It is a clump-forming plant with bluish-green, sword-shaped leaves. From May to July, stalks each bear three to five blue to lavender flowers with purple veining and a central yellow patch. The flowers span up to four inches in diameter, making them an eye-catching addition to any garden. Best planted in spring, early summer, and fall. It is specifically known to attract hummingbirds. For more information see: plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/iris-virginica



Care and Growing Tips: Southern blue-flag iris can fit nicely into a low-maintenance home landscape. Given the right growing conditions — primarily sunshine, moisture, and rich soil — it should not require much care or attention from the home gardener.

Because it is a wetland species, it can thrive in wet areas. Use it in a rain garden as a natural way to soak up water in low-lying areas or to add interest along a pond or other water feature. But it thrives in any sunny area if watered during extremely dry conditions. This iris grows best in full sun to partial shade. However, the plant might not flower if it doesn't receive enough sun. It prefers a loamy soil that is rich in organic matter. But the plant can grow in other soil types when given enough moisture.

This type of iris is considered a marginal aquatic plant, meaning it grows around the edges of water rather than in deep water. It can tolerate standing in as much as 4 inches of water, and it can survive being completely submerged for a short period, such as in a flood. It also can tolerate dry spells, though it would prefer to remain consistently moist. Provide a shallow layer of mulch around the plant to retain moisture if necessary and give it a good watering if the soil dries out. Southern blue-flag likes rich soil. So, for best results, add some compost around it each spring to provide nutrition. It is not necessary to prune the plant during the growing season, let the leaves die back naturally. For a neater appearance, you can remove the dead flower heads. After the first frost, prune back the foliage to 1 inch above the crown.