

## GARDENING MAINTANCE TIPS FOR IRIS



To maintain healthy iris plants in Southern California's unique climate, consider the following gardening tips:

- 1. Sunlight:** Irises thrive in full sun, so choose a location that receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day.
- 2. Soil:** Well-drained soil is crucial for irises to prevent root rot. If you have heavy clay soil, amend it with sand or compost to improve drainage.
- 3. Watering:** Water your irises deeply but infrequently, allowing the soil to dry out somewhat between waterings. Overwatering can lead to root rot, especially in cooler months.
- 4. Fertilizing:** Apply a low-nitrogen fertilizer in early spring and again a month after blooming. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilizers, as they can promote leaf growth at the expense of flowers.
- 5. Mulching:** A light layer of mulch can help retain soil moisture and keep weeds at bay. Be careful not to bury the rhizomes, as this can lead to rot.
- 6. Pruning:** After blooming, cut back the flower stalks to the base of the plant. In late summer or early fall, trim the leaves to about 6 inches above the ground to tidy up the plant and reduce the risk of disease.
- 7. Dividing:** Every 3-5 years, divide overcrowded clumps to rejuvenate the plants and encourage more blooms. The best time to divide is 4-6 weeks after blooming, typically in late summer.
- 8. Pest and Disease Control:** Watch for common iris problems like iris borers, thrips, and fungal diseases such as leaf spot. Remove affected parts and treat with appropriate organic or chemical controls if necessary.
- 9. Winter Care:** In Southern California, most irises do not require special winter care. However, it's a good time to remove any debris and old foliage to prevent pests and diseases.

By following these maintenance tips, your irises should thrive and provide beautiful blooms in the Southern California climate.