



Growing “Sino-Siberian” Irises Care and Culture

Unlike their 28-chromosome cousins, Sino-Siberian irises do have specific needs to thrive in your garden. With a little extra care, you will have a truly unique and beautiful addition to your perennial bed.

Note: These directions are specific to the 40-chromosome “Sino-Siberian” irises. For cultural requirements for 28-chromosome “Garden” Siberian irises, check out our Growing Siberian Irises sheet.

Hardiness Zone: 6 – 9 (may be hardy down to zone 5)

Bloom Season: Sino-Siberian irises bloom after the 28-chromosome Siberian irises and before the Japanese irises – June in our garden.

Soil conditions: Sino-Siberian irises require a loose, rich, acidic soil. Adding organic compost to your soil is important. Adding peat moss can help to make your soil more acidic.



Water: Sino-Siberian irises like year-round moisture, and they will do well along the edge of a pond or stream. In your perennial bed, they will perform at their best if they receive regular watering from early spring until the fall rains come.

Sun: In the Pacific Northwest, Sino-Siberian irises prefer full sun, with a minimum of 6 hours per day. In other areas you may need to give them afternoon shade to protect them from excess heat.

Fertilizer: Sino-Siberian irises prefer a rich, humus soil. Mulching with 1 to 2 inches of organic compost each year helps. Fertilize with a high-nitrogen fertilizer (I use 21-0-0) in the early spring and again just after bloom.
Note: do not fertilize at the time of planting. This will have a detrimental effect on your new irises.

Dividing: Sino-Siberian irises should be divided every 3 to 4 years. It is best to move them to new soil at this time. The best time to divide is fall, but it can also be done in the spring. Dig around the root ball and lift the plant out of the ground. Break the plant down to divisions of 1 to 3 fans, and trim off all the dead roots (live roots are white). Keep the roots wet until you are ready to re-plant.

Planting: Soak the roots of new plants overnight prior to planting. Plant the rhizome 2 to 3 inches deep and about 18 to 24 inches apart. Keep divisions well-watered after planting until established. Add a layer of mulch (I use compost, but tree leaves or fir needles work, too) to help retain moisture and keep the weeds down.

When the foliage dies back in the fall, cut it off close to the ground and remove it from the garden. Sino-Siberian irises need 2 to 3 years to become fully established; the first year's bloom is not representative of their performance once mature.