



Spuria Iris Society

When to Plant: Spuria are dug in the fall before they start showing signs of new growth. Rhizomes must be washed well and placed damp in a plastic bag for storage in the refrigerator, NOT in the freezer. Plant as soon as possible. (NOTE: author of this web site has had no experience using the refrigerator and this is not really necessary)

Where to Plant: Spuria thrive in full sun best, but will do well on half a day's sun throughout the year. They will tolerate partial shade, especially in areas that have extremely high temperatures in the summer.

Soil Preparation: Spuria prefer a neutral to slightly alkaline soil and they must have good drainage. Enrich soil by adding alfalfa and manure. Heavy clay soil is much better than fine sandy soil.

Basic Planting Steps: Some Spuria are difficult to establish. Basically Spuria need water, manure, and mulch to become established. Begin the planting by making sure the soil will allow for good drainage and is enriched. Then make a hole about two inches below the surface. Add fertilizer (14-14-14 is suggested) to this hole. Then put lots of water into this hole. Finally add the rhizome, cover with soil and mulch. Watering this new Spuria rhizome from the top of the soil is not sufficient for establishing a clump. Mulch Spuria the first year of growth. Saw dust is the best mulch to use. After the clump is established the mulch may be removed during the blooming season.

Distance Apart: Space Spuria far enough apart to grow in the same location for years as Spuria irises resent being transplanted. Spacing Spuria rhizomes three feet apart is suggested.
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Watering: Water regularly from October through the bloom season until about July 1st. However do not let them sit in pools of water. During the hot summer, Spuria can be allowed to go dormant by withholding water. Too much moisture combined with summer heat causes rot that damages the new growth. (See virus and fungus below)

Fertilizing: Spuria are very heavy feeders. Incorporating plenty of barnyard manure (or commercial composted manure) and/or commercial fertilizer into the soil is advisable. Ordinary lawn fertilizer (10-10-10) works well to feed the Spuria in the spring and again in the fall.

Bloom Season: Spuria usually do not bloom the first year after planting. The second year should produce several bloom stalks. The bloom time is one to two weeks after the tall bearded irises.

General Garden Care: (Note: The Spuria may die all the way back in the summer the first year. They will return in the fall when new growth begins. The species *I. cartholinae* will remain green all summer long -- it will not go dormant.)

Foliage of the summer-dormant types can be cut back to the ground for garden neatness after the foliage dies down about the first of August without harming the plant growth. Spuria seem to set seed easily and are somewhat easy to grow from seed. Bees are more attracted to Spuria than other iris; thus pollination and seed production is more prominent with Spuria.

Moving and Thinning: Although the fall is generally thought to be the best time for transplanting, they may be transplanted at other times if you are careful not to let the roots or rhizomes dry out. Storing Spuria rhizomes in the refrigerator before replanting may trigger faster growth and earlier bloom. Dip the mature rhizome in a fungicide and store them in plastic bags in the refrigerator for several weeks to get this response. (The web author has no experience with early digging and refrigerator storage.) If the rhizome is dug early and allowed to dry out, be sure to soak the rhizome in a pail of water for about 1 to 2 days before planting.

Virus and Fungus: Virus affects some Spuria irises, although it is seldom very debilitating under good cultural conditions. It can cause stunting or striping of the plant and petals.

Too much watering combined with summer heat causes mustard seed fungus growth -- and watering intermittently -- once you stop watering, do not start watering again in the summer months -- just allow the Spuria iris to go dormant.

The only serious disease is mustard seed fungus or crown rot. Soaking rhizomes in a 5% sodium hypochlorite solution and thoroughly mixing Terrachlor into the soil before planting are effective controls. Also, dust or spray annually in the summer for prevention. It is much easier to prevent the mustard seed fungus than to get rid of it once the iris is affected. Watering Spuria in August is an easy way for Spuria to become infected with fungus, so use Terrachlor as a routine measure to prevent instead of treat for mustard seed fungus.