

# Iris cristata

**North American Native**



*Iris* (*eye-ris*)  
After the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

*cristata*  
(*kris-tah-ta*) for crested, the falls.



**Zones:** 5 – 9 **Flower Color:** Blue-violet **Height:** 6” **Spacing:** 12”

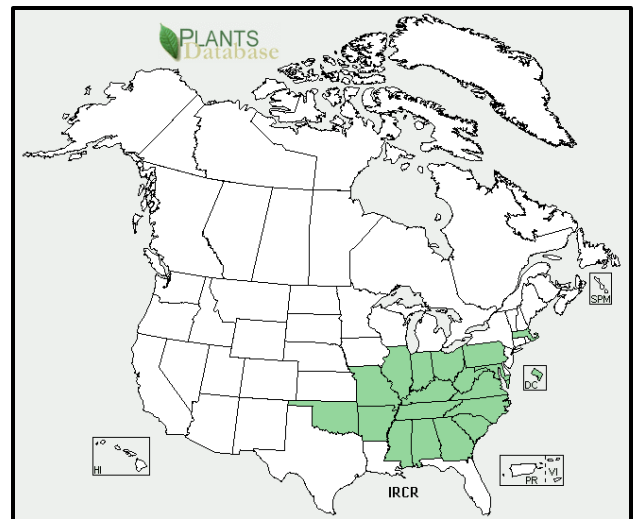
## About the Species:

**Common Name:** Dwarf Crested Iris

**Family:** Iridaceae

The Dwarf Crested Iris grows from a rhizome to form great drifts in the woodland garden. The bright green 4-inch fans support 6-inch flower stalks. Charming 2 to 3 inch wide blue-violet flowers with gold crested falls are produced in mid to late spring. The shallow rhizomes creep along the surface of the soil, tolerating many well drained soil types, but they like plenty of moisture during the summer. Dwarf Crested Iris is endangered in some states. Deer and rabbits do not usually trouble this plant; however slugs may be a problem.

**Other Uses:** Native Americans found many uses for the roots of *Iris cristata*. They chewed the roots to alleviate thirst. An ointment was made from the roots and applied to cancerous ulcers. A tea from the roots was used in the treatment of hepatitis. Cherokees made a compound decoction of pulverized root and used it as a salve for ulcers and “yellowish urine”.



USDA Plants Database

**Habitat:** Plants can be found growing in rich woods, rocky wooded slopes, wooded bottoms, along streams, shady hillsides, and ravines.

**In the Garden:** This Iris will enjoy part to heavy shade, but is sun tolerant with plenty of moisture. The mat forming habit of *Iris cristata* makes it perfect for woodland gardens, dappled shade, shady edges, ground covers, rock gardens, perennial borders, and as a cut flower for miniature arrangements.

# Iris cristata 'Alba'

*North American Native Cultivar*



*Iris* (eye-ris)  
After the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

*cristata*  
(kris-tah-ta)  
for crested, the falls.



**Zones:** 5 – 9    **Flower Color:** White    **Height:** 6”    **Spacing:** 12”

'Alba' is the pure white form of this lovely native iris. The gold crests really stand out against the white petals. It serves as a ground cover to brighten up dark corners of the garden. The leaves are narrow and yellowish-green in color and stand about 6” tall.

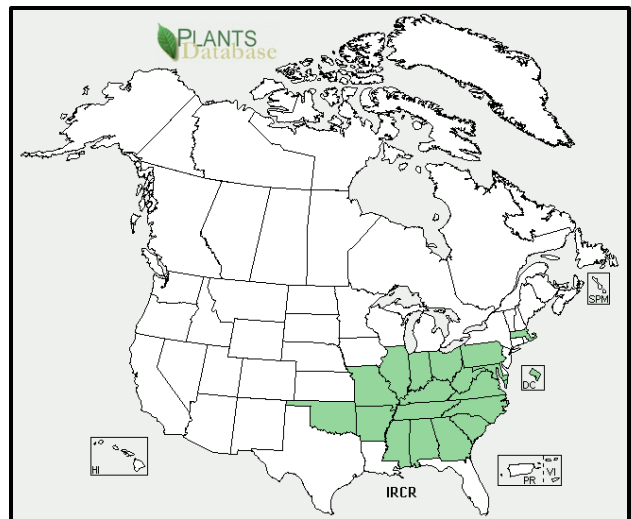
## About the Species:

**Common Name:** Dwarf Crested Iris

**Family:** Iridaceae

The Dwarf Crested Iris grows from a rhizome to form great drifts in the woodland garden. The bright green 4-inch fans support 6-inch flower stalks. Charming 2 to 3 inch wide blue-violet flowers with gold crested falls are produced in mid to late spring. The shallow rhizomes creep along the surface of the soil, tolerating many well drained soil types, but they like plenty of moisture during the summer. Dwarf Crested Iris is endangered in some states. Deer and rabbits do not usually trouble this plant; however slugs may be a problem.

**Other Uses:** Native Americans found many uses for the roots of *Iris cristata*. They chewed the roots to alleviate thirst. An ointment was made from the roots and applied to cancerous ulcers. A tea from the roots was used in the treatment of hepatitis. Cherokees made a compound decoction of pulverized root and used it as a salve for ulcers and “yellowish urine”.



USDA Plants Database

**Habitat:** Plants can be found growing in rich woods, rocky wooded slopes, wooded bottoms, along streams, shady hillsides, and ravines.

**In the Garden:** This Iris will enjoy part to heavy shade, but is sun tolerant with plenty of moisture. The mat forming habit of *Iris cristata* makes it perfect for woodland gardens, dappled shade, shady edges, ground covers, rock gardens, perennial borders, and as a cut flower for miniature arrangements.



# Iris cristata

## 'Powder Blue Giant'

*North American Native Cultivar*



*Iris* (eye-ris)

After the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

*cristata*

(kris-tah-ta) for crested, the falls.



'Powder Blue Giant' has huge soft powder blue with deep blue and white markings and gold crested blooms. Also blooming in the spring it has larger leaves than the straight species. This *cristata* grows taller to 10" with a vigorous growth habit.



**Zones:** 5 – 9

**Flower Color:** Pale Blue

**Height:** 10" **Spacing:** 12"

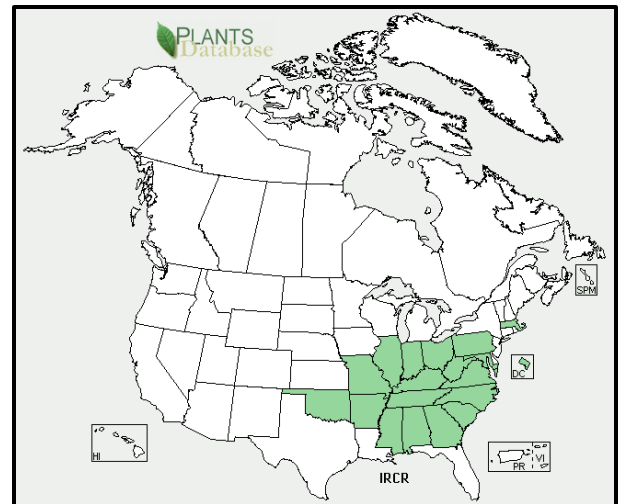
### About the Species:

**Common Name:** Dwarf Crested Iris

**Family:** Iridaceae

The Dwarf Crested Iris grows from a rhizome to form great drifts in the woodland garden. The bright green 4-inch fans support 6-inch flower stalks. Charming 2 to 3 inch wide blue-violet flowers with gold crested falls are produced in mid to late spring. The shallow rhizomes creep along the surface of the soil, tolerating many well drained soil types, but they like plenty of moisture during the summer. Dwarf Crested Iris is endangered in some states. Deer and rabbits do not usually trouble this plant; however slugs may be a problem.

**Other Uses:** Native Americans found many uses for the roots of *Iris cristata*. They chewed the roots to alleviate thirst. An ointment was made from the roots and applied to cancerous ulcers. A tea from the roots was used in the treatment of hepatitis. Cherokees made a compound decoction of pulverized root and used it as a salve for ulcers and "yellowish urine".



USDA Plants Database

**Habitat:** Plants can be found growing in rich woods, rocky wooded slopes, wooded bottoms, along streams, shady hillsides, and ravines.

**In the Garden:** This Iris will enjoy part to heavy shade, but is sun tolerant with plenty of moisture. The mat forming habit of *Iris cristata* makes it perfect for woodland gardens, dappled shade, shady edges, ground covers, rock gardens, perennial borders, and as a cut flower for miniature arrangements.

# Iris louisiana

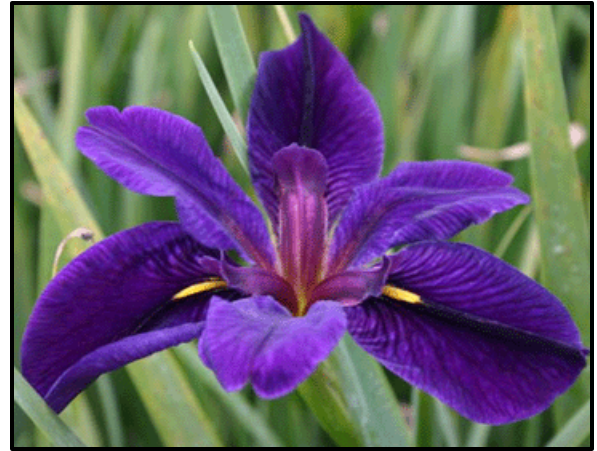
## 'Black Gamecock'

*North American Native Cultivar*



*Iris* (eye-ris)  
After the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

*Louisiana* refers to a group of related species: *I. hexagona*, *I. fulva*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. giganticaerulea*, and *I. nelsonii*



**Zones:** 5 – 9    **Flower Color:** Purple    **Height:** 24”    **Spacing:** 18”

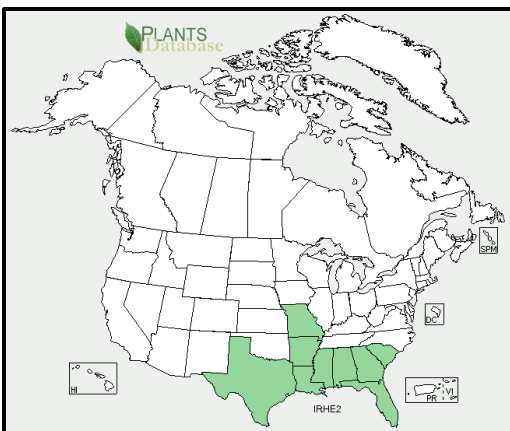
Born of the bayous of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast where moist soil is a given, the Louisiana Irises love water. The green strap-like foliage and June flowers will handle our hottest Maryland summer temperatures easily. 'Black Gamecock' has deep purple, almost black flowers. A prolific grower, it is not invasive. It is a short one at 24".

### About the Species:

**Common Name:** Louisiana Iris

Louisiana iris comprises hybridized and naturally occurring hybrids of beardless irises from 5 related species offering a wide range of colors and forms. Wild populations consist of a stunning palette of blue to lavender, yellow, white, pink and orange to red from late spring to early summer.

**Family:** Iridaceae



Native Status for *I. hexagona*: USDA Plants Database

**Habitat:** Found growing in and around wetlands in Louisiana and adjacent states.

**In the Garden:** These irises will grow in average to wet soil, but prefer constant moisture and will grow in standing water. Perfect for bog gardens, lakesides, and ponds in full sun to partial shade.



Depiction of Louisiana Iris  
James J. Audubon, 1820



# Iris versicolor

*North American Native*



*Iris* (eye-ris)  
After the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

*versicolor* (ver-si-ko-lor) meaning variously colored.



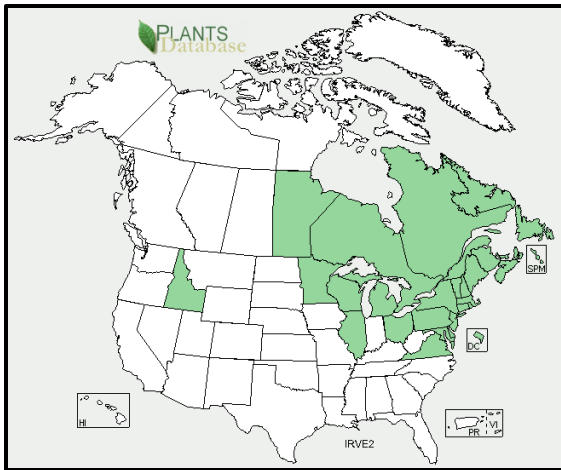
## About the Species:

**Zones:** 4 – 9    **Flower Color:** Purple    **Height:** 24 – 30”    **Spacing:** 18”

**Common Name:** Blue Flag

**Family:** Iridaceae

*Iris versicolor* grows in a clump that will reach 24-30” high and 18-24” wide and will bloom bluish purple in May-June. The sword-shaped green foliage is handsome and is attractive all season long.



**Habitat:** Found along shores, swamps, scrubs, by lakes and rivers, and in thickets, marshes, and wet meadows, *Iris versicolor* is believed to be a naturally occurring hybrid that arose when glaciers advanced southward pushing *Iris setosa* into contact with *Iris virginica*.

**In the Garden:** This *Iris* will grow in full or part sun in heavy, rich, medium to moist soils and even in standing water; perfect in shallow ponds or on the moist shoreline. In wetland areas, this *Iris* will provide cover for aquatic and semi-aquatic wildlife. Blue Flag will also absorb nutrients from ponds and can improve the quality of the water.

USDA Plants Database

**Other Uses:** This *Iris* may be poisonous; especially the raw rhizome and the sap which can cause dermatitis. *Iris versicolor*, however, has many medicinal purposes including: detoxifying the body, increasing urination and bile production and as a mild laxative. This plant can be used as a decoction, tincture, poultice or infusion. As a tea, the root has been used as a strong laxative or emetic that also acts strongly on the liver and promotes the excretion of excess body fluids. It is also a stimulant for the circulatory and lymphatic system. As a detoxifier it is useful in the treatment of arthritis, swollen glands, migraine (sick headaches), syphilis, goiter, and pelvic inflammatory disease. Externally, it is applied to skin diseases (psoriasis and eczema), wounds, sores, burns, and rheumatic joints. The rootstock (rhizome) is gathered in the fall. The fresh root is quite acrid and when taken internally causes nausea, vomiting, colic, and purging. The dried root is much less acrid. A fine blue infusion is obtained from the flowers that can be used as a litmus substitute to test for acids and alkalis.

### Don't Try This At Home

The Arizona Hopi Nation performs a Snake Ceremony, handling rattlesnakes, as a traditional praise and thanksgiving offering for the blessings of rain to the Hopi Nation. The Hopi are thought to be descended from the Anasazi (Ancient People). By handling the root of *Iris versicolor* and having the scent of the root permeating their person and clothes, it was believed it protected them from rattlesnake bites. As long as their clothes are fumigated with the scent, the snakes never strike them. They also chew the root before placing a rattlesnake in their mouths during the ceremony. Trying this snake handling might lead someone to get a migraine headache. Fortunately, a detoxifier made from *Iris versicolor* is also used for treating migraines.