IRIS CLASES

The variety of irises is almost unlimited; there are many different kinds.

Irises have come a long way since Grandma’s (or maybe Great-Grandma’s) “Purple Flags” that you see naturalized in many yards. Through most of the 20th century and on into the 21st, iris hybridizers have been breeding new varieties with blossoms that are sturdier, broader, fluffier, more interesting in their coloration and markings. And they have even developed varieties that bloom more than once during the year. Here’s just a few varieties that grow well in the Albuquerque and surrounding areas of the southwest.

**Aril** irises are native to the sandy deserts of the Middle East. While pure Arils are fussy about soil conditions, especially drainage, they readily interbreed with other bearded irises. The hybrids (called Arilbreds) grow as easily in the Albuquerque area as the other bearded irises.

**Tall Bearded** irises, the “Flags” of the past, are the most familiar cultivated irises Historic irises have slender standards (the upper petals) and falls (the lower petals), much like TURKISH TOPAZ. Hybridizers have worked to broaden the petals, flare the falls, and add interest to the petal edges.

**Space-Age** irises were developed late in the 20th century. The beards of these irises are have some kind appendage, originally a “horn,” and later with ever more petal-like “spoons” or “flounces.”

## Reblooming irises are increasingly available in recent years. They produce blossoms in the spring and again in the fall, and some bloom nearly all year around with a favorable climate and growing conditions.

Several classes of smaller irises, some of which bloom very early, have also been developed in recent years. They bring spring bloom to the garden weeks ahead of the Tall Bearded irises and come in many colors and color patterns.

**Miniature Dwarf Bearded** irises are the smallest and earliest to bloom of the bearded classes, growing only up to 8 inches tall.

**Standard Dwarf Bearded** irises grow from 8 to 16 inches tall and come into bloom as the MDBs are fading, but still very early in the season. SDBs are usually vigorous growers, forming large clumps, and some varieties are among the most reliable of the rebloomers.

**Intermediate Bearded** irises are from 16 to 27 1/2 inches tall, and bloom midway between the SDBs and the Tall Bearded irises.

Other types of irises such as the Border Beardeds, Siberians, and Spurias, do well in the Albuquerque area as well. More information about the various classes of irises and photos of many of them can be found on the American Iris Society’s website www.irises.org (click on Iris Encyclopedia).

[We will be adding photos of each of these varieties listed to this document at a later date, but meanwhile check out our photo gallery for an idea of them.]