

## *Dividing Iris in the Fall Garden*

If you have Iris growing in your garden, you know how beautiful and carefree these perennial plants can be. Iris can live for many years in the garden when they are well cared for. But Iris, like many plants that grow from rhizomes (such as Canna and Bergenia), have to be divided in order to help them thrive. You should typically divide Iris and other plants grown from rhizomes every **three years** and **August and September** is the perfect time to do this. A good way to know when it is time to divide your plants is when you begin to see die-back in the center of the bunch or if you start seeing the rhizomes heave out of the ground due to overcrowding.

When you decide to divide your Iris, try to choose a day that is overcast to reduce the overall stress of the plant. Start by taking a garden fork or spade and gently dig around the edges, being careful not to dig too roughly. The Iris should lift easily out of the ground. Shake or wash off the rhizomes so you can have a clear view of where to divide. Separate healthy rhizomes from ones that look diseased. The rhizomes may then be divided gently by cutting through them with a knife or, alternatively, with shears if they are tough and woody. Cut rhizomes that have at least one dormant bud. The divided rhizomes may then be replanted in the same bed, moved to other places in the garden, or shared with friends. Cut the leaves back to 6 inches so the energy of the plant can be focused on re-establishing new roots. Place the rhizomes in the chosen location and spread the roots out in the soil with the top of the rhizome above the surface of the soil. NOTE: Iris's do not like to be planted too deeply and will not flower as well if the top of the rhizome is not hit by the sun. Point the rhizomes away from each other, allowing for 18 - 20 inches between each plant. Cover the roots with soil and thoroughly water. Next spring, you will be rewarded with an amazing display in the garden.