

Fortnight Lily, African Iris, Morea Iris

Dietes iridioides **Tropical Perennial**



These are evergreen perennials with spreading fans of stiff, leathery sword shaped leaves up to 2 ft in length but only 3/4" wide. The upright clumps of leaves are held in a vertical fanlike plane and they spread on creeping rhizomes and by producing seeds after the flowers. A profusion of spectacular iris-like flowers are produced throughout spring and summer. The 3-inch flowers are milky white with yellow markings, and have blue to purple centers. Blooms rise above the foliage on thin 2-4 foot flower stalks, individual flowers last only one day, but don't cut the spent blooms – they make seeds AND more flowers will emerge from the same stem –even in subsequent years, so don't cut those bloom stems.

The fortnight lilies are often grown in borders because the narrow leaves are evergreen, and provide a strong vertical element. They're good along foundations, too. Fortnight lilies are quite versatile, growing well in anything from dappled shade to full sun; I find they have more blooms when planted in more sun, however.

Once established, fortnight lilies tolerate poor, dry soils, but do best in a well drained soil with regular watering during the growing season. Reduce water and fertilizer after flowering. Hardy in zones 8 - 10. Fortnight lilies may be killed by severe winters in upper zone 8. Keep dry in winter and protect with mulch. Can be container grown in colder zones.

CARE AND PLANTING:

African Iris' can be grown in full sun or partial shade. If your final garden spot is in a place that you can't keep it well watered for a couple of weeks, then plant in a pot and allow it to re-establish its roots and then transplant from the pot to the final destination. In the garden, plant in well draining soil about 12" – 15" away from other plants. Plant deep enough to cover roots, but don't plant deeper than about 2" above the roots. You can't always tell the original soil line by the color of the stem because some fans may have been growing in the middle of a group and the lower part of the stem would be light in color, even though it was not under the soil line. Water in well and keep well watered (daily watering) until they have recovered from the trip; about 10 – 14 days.

The clump you have received may be divided into individual 'fans' or plants or you can leave them together to make one group. Unlike some other iris', **DO NOT CUT THE LEAVES BACK** on these plants when transplanting or dividing; this will set the plant back severely.