



Iris virginica  
virginia or Southern Blue Flag

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

The wetland species of Southern Blue Flag\* and its close relative, Northern Blue Flag (*Iris versicolor*),\*\* grow in fresh to mildly brackish tidal marshes and wet meadows of the Mid-Atlantic, but the former is mostly found from Virginia southward to Florida. Both [native](#) irises share similar growth habits and showy flowers that attract hummingbirds.



Perennial	Plants & Flower,* Colony with Hummingbird**
Height: 1–3 feet	
Spread: 1–2 feet	
Bloom Color: Light blue to deep violet	
Characteristics	
Upright, clumping herbaceous <a href="#">perennial</a>	
Weakly arching, bright green, sword-shaped, <a href="#">parallel-veined</a> basal leaves rise from shallow roots	
Blue flowers with darker purple veins and bright yellow <a href="#">signals</a> bloom on tall stalks from May to July	
Green to brown 3-locular, <a href="#">loculicidal capsule</a>	
Spreads by <a href="#">rhizomes</a> to form colonies	
Attributes	
Tolerates <a href="#">clay soil</a> , light shade, and flooding	
No serious pests—but snails may eat foliage and muskrats eat rhizomes—or diseases; <a href="#">deer</a> and rabbits rarely damage	
<a href="#">Ethnobotanic</a> , therapeutic, and herbal uses	
Attracts bees, <a href="#">lepidopterans</a> , hummers	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Wet, acidic soils	<a href="#">Iris pseudacorus</a> - Yellow Flag Iris
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Sun	
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist, Wet	<p>*<i>I. virginica</i> is native in DC and in Prince George’s and Kent Counties in MD. In VA, it is frequent to locally common in the Coastal Plain and infrequent to rare inland. In NoVA, it is native to Fairfax and Prince William Counties. It is pictured in full form and close-up above.</p> <p>**<i>I. versicolor</i> is native in DC, DE, MD’s Anne Arundel and Calvert Counties, mostly the eastern and northwestern counties of PA, and northward into Canada. In VA, it is infrequent to rare in the mountains, northern Piedmont, and northern Coastal Plain. In NoVA, it is native in Fairfax and Loudoun Counties. It is pictured with a ruby-throated hummingbird above.</p>
Propagate by clump division in early fall when leaves begin to turn yellow (wear gloves)	
Use along water’s edge, in water garden, or in rain garden that is consistently moist to wet	
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 5-9	

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills (top), Meadowlark Botanical Gardens and Mary Free (bottom), Fort Shantok, CT