

What Are Arilbred Iris?

Arilbreds are the product of breeding arils (oncocyclus and regelia) with the more common bearded irises. They have many of the characteristic flower traits of the arils, but are much easier to grow in different climates.

Arilbreds are classified according to the quantity of aril ancestry they have, and whether that aril ancestry is oncocyclus, regelia, or both. Arilbreds with only oncocyclus and bearded ancestry are called oncobreds; those with only regelia and bearded ancestry are called regeliabreds. Nearly all commonly grown arilbreds, however, are of mixed ancestry: oncocyclus, regelia, and bearded. These are called oncogeliabreds.

The Aril Society uses a special notation to indicate the amount and type of aril ancestry that an arilbred iris has. The abbreviations OB, RB, and OGB are used to indicate oncobred, regeliabred, and oncogeliabred, respectively. Then a "+" or "-" is added to show that the iris is more than half aril or less than half aril. No added symbol means it is half aril. For example, OGB+ signifies an oncogeliabred that is more than half aril.

The OGB irises comprise the largest group of arilbreds and have the best balance of aril characteristics with ease of culture.

Small arilbreds with dwarf or median ancestry are sometimes referred to as "arilbred medians." This is not an official designation, but it can be useful in selecting plants for the garden. Most arilbred medians fall in the OGB- class.

Beginners new to arilbreds can use the following as a guide, although it is only a rudimentary explanation to the classification system.

- OGB+** 3/4 or 2/3 bred oncogelia hybrid
- OB+** 3/4 or 2/3 bred oncocyclus hybrid
- RB+** 3/4 or 2/3 bred regelia hybrid
- OGB** 1/2 bred oncogelia hybrid
- OB** 1/2 bred oncocyclus hybrid
- RB** 1/2 bred regelia hybrid
- OGB-** 1/4 or 1/3 bred oncogelia hybrid
- OB-** 1/4 or 1/3 bred oncocyclus hybrid
- RB-** 1/4 or 1/3 bred regelia hybrid

3/4, 1/2, and 1/4 breds refer to tetraploids. 1/2 breds may also refer to diploids. 2/3 and 1/3 breds refer to triploids. Pentaploids, hexaploids, octoploids, and others exist, but are rarely encountered.



Ancient Scrolls
Rich 1990
OGB



Bold Sentry
Peterson 1983
OGB-



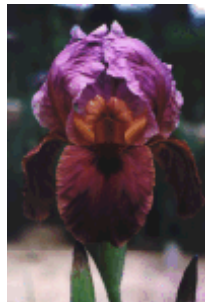
Daringly Different
McAllister 1993
OGB+



Desert Thunder
Flanagan 1991
OGB



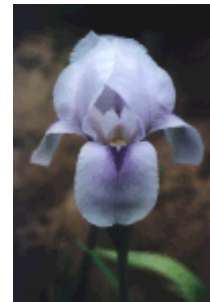
Granted Wish
Peterson 1976
OGB



Kalifa Abra
White 1963
OGB



Mohric Art
Peterson 1986
OGB-



Sky Signal
Shockey 1979
OGB+

CULTURE FOR ARIL IRIS

Because arils originate from arid geographical areas, they tend to go completely dormant in the summer, losing all their leaves. During this dormant period, they cannot tolerate much water. Moisture at this time can cause the dormant plants to rot.

They are not, however, especially susceptible to winter cold. They are as hardy as the more common tall bearded irises.

The regelias (and aril hybrids with a fair amount of regelia ancestry) are more adaptable than the oncocylus irises, and are less likely to rot during their summer dormancy.

Although arils are difficult, gardeners living in the southwestern US or similar climate should have some degree of success without extra trouble. In climates that are not so dry (20 inches of rain per year or more), considerable amounts of both labor and luck will be needed.

Preparing the Site

For all arils, sharp drainage is the prime requisite for successful culture. They are desert plants, so they need full sun for at least two-thirds of the day. If possible, some protection from cold and wind is helpful.

Washed brick sand, granite, ground pumice, lava, or other coarse material, can be worked into the soil to improve drainage. There should be a good supply of calcium. (Gypsum can be used to provide calcium and loosen heavy soil.) If the soil is acid, lime should be added. Planting the irises on hills or ridges can help the drainage in marginal soils. Many people plant arils in raised beds where sharp drainage can be "built in."

Planting and Care

In northern areas, planting should be completed by early September. In southern areas, it is advisable to wait a little longer. The idea is to encourage root growth with a minimum of leaf growth, especially in the north. Water well after planting, unless it is very hot, in which case it is best to wait a week or so. Keep them moist until frost. In dry areas where the soil does not freeze, water occasionally during the winter.

In areas of extreme cold, a winter mulch can be used, but it should be a material that does not hold water, and should be removed before spring growth begins.

Resume normal watering in the spring, and do not let the plants dry out until several weeks after bloom. At this time, withhold water completely and allow the plants to go dormant. Start watering again as new growth emerges in the fall.

In some humid areas, it may be advisable to lift the rhizomes when they go dormant, disinfect them, and store them in dry sand or vermiculite until fall planting time. Another way to protect arils from summer moisture is to erect a rain cover over the bed, being sure that there are no "walls" and that there is plenty of air circulation at ground level.

CULTURE FOR ARILBRED IRIS

Although the arilbreds are much more adaptable than their aril ancestors are, they can still be difficult in climates where summers are wet or cool. Generally speaking, the arilbreds with less than half aril ancestry can be grown the same as bearded irises with a good expectation of success. Conversely, some of those with more than half aril ancestry may actually need to be grown like the pure arils.

All arilbreds are suitable for xeriscape gardening, as they have much less need for water (especially in the summer months) than do bearded irises.

Modern arilbreds of half aril ancestry (the OGB class, chiefly) are the most commonly grown and are not difficult in most climates. Treat them like bearded irises, but take extra care to see that they have good drainage and do not get too wet in the summer. They do not go dormant like the arils, but they are still somewhat more susceptible to summer rot than their bearded relatives. The conditions they enjoy can often be provided by something as simple as planting on high ground, or in a corner of the bed, that gets a little less water.

In recent years, more OGB+ type arilbreds (more than half aril) have been produced that are as easy to grow as the OGB types. If you can grow OGBs successfully, it is worth experimenting with a selection of OGB+ arilbreds: many will probably do well.

In areas where the soil is acid, lime should be added. Gypsum is also recommended as a soil amendment. Planting on ridges or hills improves drainage.

Arilbreds usually need more frequent division than bearded irises. They tend to produce rampant, crowded growth. Division every other year is recommended. They should be divided about two or three months after blooming (July or August in most areas).

Recommended Cultivars

OGB-

Butterscotch Baby
Cairo Sands
Desert Melody
Desert Solitude
Dizzy Sammy
Dune
Engraved
Genetic Burst (RB-)
Humohr
Impudent Elf
Lady Bernstein
Lady Mohr
Loudmouth
Old Fashioned Girl
Omar the Tentmaker
Omar's Torch
Pebble Brook
Prairie Thunder
Totem

OGB

Arabian Archer
Babylonian Fires
Baghdad's Folly
Bridesmaid's Apparel
Burra Sahib
Close Contact
Desert Diamond
Desert Pansy

Desert Plum
Desert Thunder
Engraved Invitation
Event Horizon
Howdah
Kalifa's Robe
Kiosk
Mohr Pretender
Onlooker
Oyez
Pro News
Seraph's Jewel
Step Aside
Turkish Herald
Turkish Pendant
Turkish Tangent
Unclaimed Treasure

OGB+

Aurora's Veil
Circus Parade
Desert Fury
Gelee Royale
Jeweled Veil (OB+)
Nitzan
Pastel Tracery
Persian Padishah
Sharina
Syrian Jewel
Turkish Treat

This is only a cursory listing. Many other fine arils and arilbreds are available. Historic arilbreds (ones that have been around for a long time) which have survived the test of time tend to be VERY easy to grow and are the most carefree.