



News Photos by Dan Rosenstrauch

A couple walks along the path in Berm Park, which can be accessed from the foot of Golden Rain Road just south of Entry 1 or a few feet from the northwest intersection of Tice Creek Drive and Golden Rain Road.

See all the colors of the rainbow in Rossmoor's new Iris Garden

By Tom Wilhite
Terra Landscape

The genus *Iris* contains about 300 species of flowering perennials, many of which are native to North America. They've been cultivated for their spectacular, often multicolored, spring or summer blooms for much of recorded history, with the earliest known depiction on a fresco in King Minos' palace (built in 2100 B.C.) on the Greek is-

land of Crete.

The Ancient Egyptians revered the flowers, and the Greek goddess of the rainbow was named *Iris*. This beautiful messenger to the gods traveled on the rainbow between heaven and earth.

Irises can be divided into two general groups: Those that grow from bulbs, resembling a garlic bulb, and those that grow from rhizomes, resembling oversized ginger roots.

Each flower includes three inner petals (called standards), which are usually held upright, and three outer sepals (called falls), which are horizontal or drooping.

The falls may be bearded (with an adornment resembling a fuzzy caterpillar), beardless (smooth) or crested (with a comb-like ridge). Many iris flowers – as well as their roots – are sweetly fragrant.

Among the many types, tall bearded irises are probably the most popular. They're easy to grow, requiring only decent drainage, moderate

water and occasional feeding for top performance.

Breeders have produced thousands of varieties and given them fanciful names such as "River Romance" (lavender blue standards and falls), "Point of No Return" (butter yellow standards, violet blue falls marked with a white sunburst) and "Trumped" (white standards, plum purple falls).

If you'd like to see these varieties and more in bloom, be sure to visit the new Iris Garden in Rossmoor in mid-spring. The garden is inside the "Berm Park," which can be entered on foot from Golden Rain Road just south of Entry 1, or from Tice Creek Drive, a few feet northwest of the intersection with Golden Rain Road. Parking is on the street or in the Gateway parking lot.

To learn more about irises in general, check out the website of the American Iris Society: <http://www.irises.org>.

Rossmoor Landscape Manager Rebecca Pollon contributed to this report

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