

Iris domestica: Blackberry Lily¹

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<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

This Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ publication is part of a series originally written by Edward F. Gilman. Visit <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu> to learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water resources and environment.

Introduction

Blackberry lily is an upright grass-like herbaceous perennial in the Iris (*Iridaceae*) family (Figure 1). This plant has strap-like leaves 12 to 18 inches long borne on short, upright stems about 2 feet long, but may vary in height depending upon cultivar selection (Figure 2). It produces showy bright orange-yellow flowers atop the foliage and fills the landscape with warm color, during the spring through fall bloom season (Figure 3). Cultivars of this plant produce yellow, or pink and purple flowers (Figure 4). Individual flowers last 1 to 2 days, but new blooms emerge the next day. Fruit pods split and curl, revealing clusters of black seeds resembling a blackberry, hence the common name (Figure 5). In colder regions, this plant will die back to the ground during winter but reemerges during the spring. It is well suited as a container plant, a foundation plant or utilized in mass planting. It can be used as a border and is attractive to butterflies. It may also be used in flower arrangements as a cut flower.

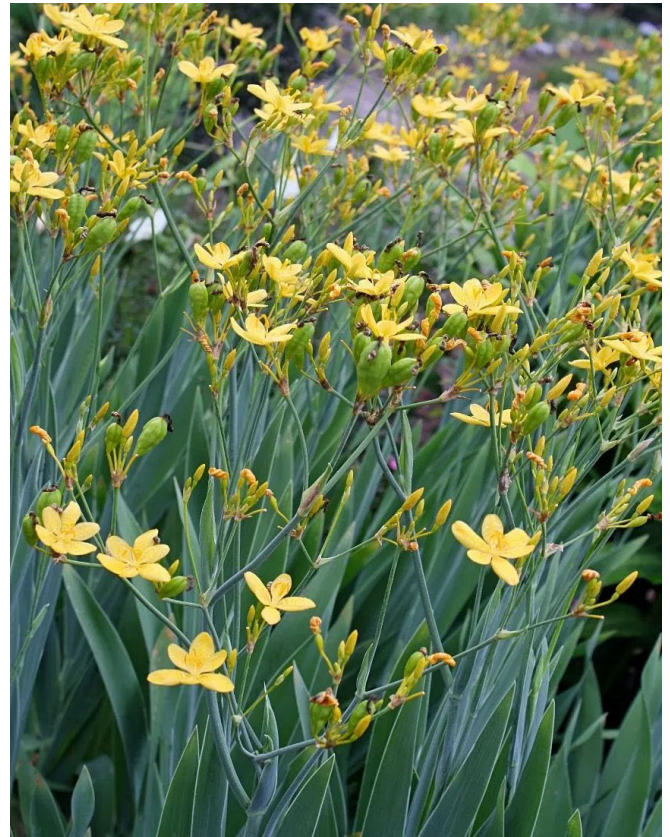


Figure 1. Full form—*Iris domestica* 'Gone with the Wind': blackberry lily.

Credit: Juniper Level Botanic Garden,
<https://www.jlbg.org>



Figure 2. Leaf—*Iris domestica*: blackberry lily.
Credit: © Jazmin L, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)
via iNaturalist



Figure 4. Flower—*Iris domestica* 'Gone with the Wind':
blackberry lily.
Credit: Juniper Level Botanic Garden,
<https://www.jlbg.org>



Figure 3. Flower—*Iris domestica*: blackberry lily.
Credit: © Júlio Castellain, some rights reserved via
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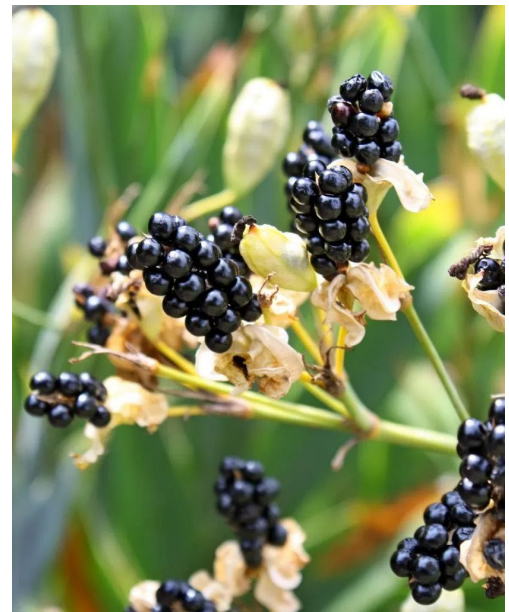


Figure 5. Fruit—*Iris domestica*: blackberry lily seed
pod.
Credit: Juniper Level Botanic Garden,
<https://www.jlbg.org>

General Information

Scientific name: *Iris domestica*

Previous name(s): *Belamcanda chinensis* (synonym)

Pronunciation: EYE-riss doe-mess-TICK-kuh

Common name(s): blackberry lily, leopard flower, dwarf tiger lily, leopard lily

Family: *Iridaceae*

Plant type: perennial; bulb/tuber

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 10A (Figures 6 and 7)

USDA Hardiness Zones 5A-10A

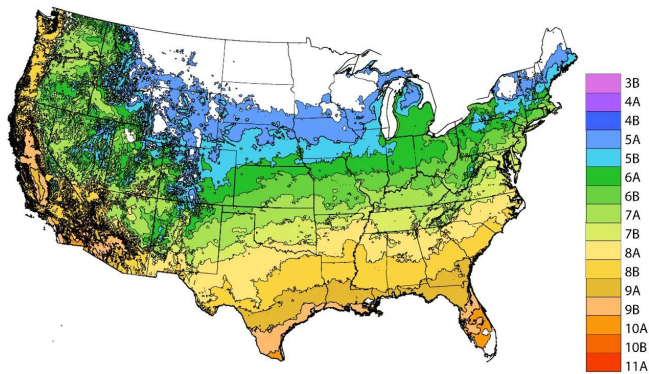


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 5A-10A.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

USDA Hardiness Zones 7B-10A

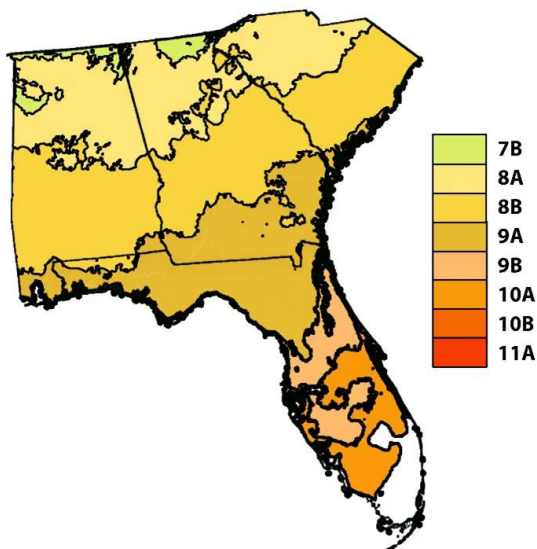


Figure 7. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 7B-10A.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

Planting month for zone 7: year-round

Planting month for zone 8: year-round

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Planting month for zones 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: foundation; mass planting; cut flowers; border; attracts butterflies; container

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 1 to 4 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow; orange; red; purple; pink; dependent upon cultivar selection

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod or pod-like

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun; plant grows in partial shade

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; loam; clay; sand; well drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest; dies back during winter

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Blackberry lilies thrive and bloom most prolifically in full sun locations. This plant also tolerates partial shade and will still produce blooms in these locations. This plant tolerates a variety of soil conditions; however, the planting site should be well drained. This plant is drought tolerant once established. Blackberry lily is a rhizomatous perennial plant, which may die back in the winter, but returns the following spring.

Propagation is by divisions of rhizomes or by seed.

Design Considerations

Blackberry lily is a versatile plant that can be incorporated into the landscape in several ways. It works well as an accent plant in a shrub border or can stand alone in a low, dense ground cover. For a more defined and dramatic effect, consider using it to line a walkway or in a mass planting. When creating a mass planting, space the plants on three-foot centers to achieve a full, cohesive look. To enhance its visual appeal, pair the blackberry lily with companion plants that offer complementary colors and textures. Black-eyed Susans, for example, provide a brilliant color contrast with their bright yellow petals against the lily's spotted blooms, and they thrive in similar growing conditions. For a more naturalistic feel, plant it alongside ornamental grasses, which introduce soft texture and graceful movement to the garden.

Pests and Diseases

No pest issues of major concern. Disease issues include crown rot, which can kill plants if the soil remains too wet. Scorch causes the upper parts of leaves to brown and wither in the summer in the full sun without adequate soil moisture supply.

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