

The King of Spring - Bearded Irises

IGMA Artisan, Michele Carter shows you how to make these classic bulb flowers

One of my favorite spring flowers is the Bearded Iris. It comes in such a glorious array of colors that you can have a rainbow of color in your garden for weeks each year. In California, we are twice blessed, as we have a “second season” when the Irises bloom again in the fall.

So as you can imagine, the Iris was right at the top of my list of miniature flowers to make and share with other flower lovers.

Because there are so many color combinations for bearded Irises, I will provide you with diagrams that show several varieties that work well together in an arrangement. These suggestions are just that – suggestions. Don’t be afraid to try your own combinations – yellow and purple would be fun together for example.

I offer Iris Kits for sale in the color combinations shown in this article on my website.

YOU WILL NEED

- Twice as Tacky glue
- Toothpicks
- Delta Creamcoat Seminole Green paint
- Small side cutter pliers
- Visor magnifying or reading glasses
- Lace Tool stylus
- Plain-colored mouse pad
(or double-thick craft foam)
- Small, sharp scissors
- Small & large paintbrushes
- Tweezers
- Slo-Zap or Super Glue
- Block of Styrofoam or floral foam
- #24 green floral wire
- 5/16” teardrop punch
- Ribbon paper in your choice of colors
- Yellow flocking (red as well if you are making the Yellow Irises)
- White airmail-weight paper for leaves
- Vase
- Floral foam (for inside vase)

Source Notes

- *The Paper Ribbon I mention is available at Michael's,*

as is the #24 green floral wire.

- I buy airmail weight writing paper at Long's Drugs. It comes in a 6" X 9" pad of 60 sheets.

- The Kemper A3N Lace Tool* stylus is used to shape both the petals and the leaves and is critical for getting the right curl and "furl" for the Iris petals. Lace Tool styluses are hard to find in hobby stores. Look in your yellow pages for a Ceramic Supply store or contact me. I have a supply of them for sale to kit purchasers.

- The 5/16" teardrop punch is available at your local craft store.

Step 1 – Punch petals

Hold your punch so that it goes with the grain of the ribbon paper, and punch a total of 6 petals per flower. For this bouquet shown in this article, you will be making 10 flowers, so you will need 60 punched petals per bouquet.

Refer to color charts to select which bouquet you would like to make, and punch the appropriate number of each color petal for the bouquet you have chosen.

Yellow & Red Combination (insert chart)

24 Yellow petals
18 Dark red petals
18 Cream petals

Pink & Violet Combination (insert chart)

18 Violet petals
24 Pink petals
18 White petals

Purple & Violet Combination (insert chart)

24 Purple petals
24 Violet petals
12 White petals

Blue & White Combination (insert chart)

24 Dark blue petals
18 Light blue petals
18 White petals

Step 2 - Paint the leaf paper

Since your paper will need time to dry, paint it now. Use a broad paintbrush to apply the Delta Creamcoat Seminole Green acrylic craft paint. Be sure to keep all of your strokes vertical on the paper, and going in the same direction. When dry, paint the other side, being sure to keep the strokes going in the same direction as the first side.

Step 3 – Shape the petals

Place all of your petals on a plain-colored mouse pad or double-thick craft foam. With your Lace Tool stylus, score each petal from the top to the bottom down the centerline of the petal. Press firmly, so that the petal edges become furled, and the bottom, pointed part of the petal curls under.

Step 4— Add the bottom 3 petals

Note: For the two-toned flowers, always use the darker color for the bottom petals in the bloom.

The bottom three petals should be placed evenly spaced around the stem. Looking down from above, the three petals would be at 12:00, 4:00, and 8:00, for example. (See diagram to the right.) With tacky glue, attach the pointed tip of the petal to the wire stem, with the curled part of the petal pointing down. Once you have all three petals glued to the stem, stick in floral foam to dry. Continue for all 10 flowers.

Step 5 – Apply yellow* flocking

Dab a small drop of tacky glue to the top side of each bottom petal, close to the wire stem. Dip the petals into the yellow flocking and brush off any excess. Repeat for all 10 stems. Stick stems into Styrofoam to dry.

* For yellow Irises, use orange flocking for contrast.

Step 6 – Add top petals

Once your flocking is dry, apply the 3 top petals using a tiny amount of tacky glue on the bottom of the tip of each curled petal. (See diagrams at the right.) Be sure to cover the top of the metal stem when applying the top petals.

Step 7 – Paint the stems

Once the petals are dry, with a small brush, paint the stems of all 10 Irises with the same Seminole green craft paint

you used for the leaves. Stick in Styrofoam to dry.

Step 8 – Cut and shape the leaves

Once the paper has thoroughly dried, fold it in half along the vertical axis, following the grain. Score the folded edge with your fingernail to create a crisp fold. With small, sharp scissors cut out 7 or 8 leaves about 1 1/2 to 2" long X 1/16" to 3/32" wide at the widest part of the leaf when unfolded (see diagram). Make sure they are not all the same length. Unfold the paper and flatten the leaf. Slightly curl the leaves with your Lace Tool stylus by very lightly pressing down with the stylus across the grain and dragging the stylus from the middle of the leaf to the tip. Caution: Don't over curl the leaves as Iris leaves are fairly straight and vertical. You just want to give the leaves a natural flow as opposed to looking like a stiff piece of paper.

Step 9 – Build your arrangement

Tip: Before I start building a bouquet, I attach the vase with "Blue Tack" to a small 1/12th-scale table. This allows me to handle the arrangement without disturbing the placed flowers.

Bend the stems

To put a slight bend in the stems, hold the bloom in both hands, and with your thumbs placed in the center of the stem, gently push forward with your thumbs. Do not over bend. You only want a very slight bend in the stems as Irises are very upright plants with thick stalks.

Create the Frame

Tip: Trim your stems to about 1 1/2" to 1 3/4" as you place them into the vase. Trial fit the arrangement and trim the stems shorter if necessary. Once you have cut a stem too short, there is no way to make it longer.

Now you are ready to start inserting your flowers. I like to create a "frame" – the structure and shape of my arrangement – with the first few flowers. This establishes the dimensions from top to bottom and across the width of the bouquet. Place the shorter stems to the outside of the arrangement, and the taller ones to the center. Try to vary the colors as you build the bouquet. You don't want too many of the same color in one section of your arrangement.

Secure the arrangement

When you are happy with the overall placement of the Irises, use Slo-Zap or Crazy Glue to secure the bouquet. Place small drops of glue around the base

of the stems where they enter the vase. Be careful not to get any glue on the vase. Gently tap the bottom of the vase on your work surface to "seat" the glue.

Step 10 – Add the leaves

Touch up the leaf edges

Since the leaves are painted on white paper, the edges will be white after you cut them, which detracts from the overall realism you are trying to achieve. To touch them up, hold your paint brush at 90 degrees to the edge of the leaf and paint the edges with the side of the brush, not the tip of the brush. Keep the brush fairly "dry" with not too much paint on it. Touch the brush to the edge of the leaf, moving laterally around the leaf. Do not move the brush up and down. You want to keep the paint on the edge without getting any on the top or bottom of the leaf. Use Delta Creamcoat Seminole Green for the touch up.

Insert leaves

Once your bouquet is "set", you can add the leaves. Dip the bottom of each leaf in tacky glue, insert the base of the leaf down into the arrangement as far as you can, in the throat of the vase. Inset the leaves into the arrangement wherever there is a gap. Add only enough leaves to make a pleasing arrangement.
YOU ARE DONE!!

Michele Carter is an IGMA Artisan, and a professionally trained artist. She and her husband, Dan Worsham are creative partners in their business, PepperWood Miniatures, making high-quality, collectible miniature floral arrangements, accessories, Tiffany lamps, and original paintings. To see more of her work, visit their website at www.pepperwoodminiatures.com.