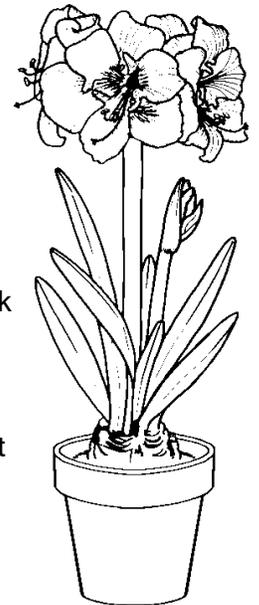


AMARYLLIS

Amaryllis bulbs appear in our stores in late fall. They are sold either boxed singly with a pot or pre-planted. Many colors are available, ranging from white to pink, yellow, orange, scarlet and dark red as well as bicolor and striped varieties. The usual flowering season is from February to April.

PLANTING

Plant the lower half of the bulb in suitable 5-6-inch pot, 2" between the bulb and the edge of the pot, ensuring the bulb is below the soil line. Keep pot in bright light at 60-70°F. Water sparingly until growth begins. A flower stalk will appear within six weeks. Rotate the pot twice a week to prevent leaning toward light. Water when needed to keep soil moist but not soggy. Amaryllis bloom best when they are pot-bound, so they will require repotting only every three or four years and can grow to about 24" tall. Sometimes, stalks become top-heavy and require staking. Insert a support (be careful not to injure the bulb) and gently use a soft tie to secure the stalk to the support.



PLANT CARE

If you would like to keep your bulb going and enjoy an annual display, snip off spent flowers as they fade but leave the stalk to wither slightly. Keep watering at least another month. After a little leaf growth appears many large bulbs may produce a second flower stalk. For appearance sake, the first stalk can be trimmed off, although the green stalk does provide nourishment to the depleted bulb.

When the flowering period is over, begin feeding half-strength plant food each week and continue to provide all the light you can, natural or artificial.

When all danger of frost has passed, you can begin the transition outdoors. Take the potted bulbs outside to a bright spot out of direct sun. A week later they can be moved into filtered sun, and in another week into full sun. If you have an area that drains well, the pots can be sunk into the ground. Avoid any areas where slugs are present. The current leaves may scorch, turning dark mottled red, but soon there will be many new leaves. Bud stalks are produced with every fifth leaf.

Sunshine, good drainage and frequent feeding are crucial, so don't leave bulbs where they will be smothered by summer growth of neighboring plants. Feed with a well-balanced fertilizer. Never fertilize a plant in dry soil, as this can shock and burn any plant, especially recent transplants. Larger containers have the advantage of deeper soil that is less prone to evaporation. Roots need a cool

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environment even though leaves enjoy full sun. In addition, spider mites may attack this plant if the pot is kept in a very dry atmosphere.

DORMANCY

Leaves will begin to yellow as the dormant period approaches in September. When this is obvious, the amount of water given can be slowly decreased. **Do not withhold water to the point of the collapse of the leaves.** An amaryllis rushed into dormancy by premature drying will not set a flower bud. Bulbs in the ground should be removed at the first light frost or sooner in a wet year to avoid rot. Remove dead or limp leaves; water sparingly while the remaining leaves decline. Cease watering entirely when all top growth has shriveled and store the bulb in its pot in a warm location. This is one of the few bulbs that require a warm dormant period. Move the plant to a cool (40-50 degrees F) dry location such as a basement. Let the bulb rest for about 6-8 weeks.

BREAKING DORMANCY

Most amaryllis need a rest without any water for at least four months from the time the foliage dies down. Unlike other bulbs, amaryllises don't usually start top growth without re-watering. Start re-watering in early January. Turn bulbs carefully out of their pots beforehand to see if there is any sign of root action. When an amaryllis breaks dormancy, it will have swollen white roots. If there are none of these roots, the bulb is not fully rested. Dead roots may be removed.

Amaryllis dislike root disturbance so now is the time to plan your next summer placement of bulbs and repot accordingly. Most home-saved amaryllis are not nearly as large the second year. You may want to group your collection in a large pot with one inch of space between bulbs.

PROPAGATION

Repot in rich, dry soil. Do not plant a dormant bulb in wet soil or rot may set in. Commercial potting soil mixed with half peat moss, a heavy sprinkling of sand or perlite and one cup of bone meal per dry gallon of mix is suitable. Leave the bulb halfway out of the planting mix and water lightly. It takes three to six weeks for top growth to respond although not all your bulbs will start regrowth together, even if they went into dormancy at the same time. If the bulb is firm to the touch you should get a flower. Plants will bloom more profusely with age and continued good care.

Some amaryllis bulbs will produce offsets, which are smaller bulblets attached to the older bulbs. Detach them from the mother bulb and plant in individual four-inch pots. Each bulblet can grow to blooming size in a few years. Several offsets can be potted together in a larger container. Or plant a mother bulb and offsets into an oversized container where they can remain and mature. If the bulblets are grouped unevenly, gently detach them, rearrange attractively, and enjoy a special display in a few years.