

TIPS ON GROWING AMARYLLIS



Large lily-shaped flowers of the amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* species) make excellent potted plants and are very easy to grow. Most bulbs are Dutch or South African-grown hybrids that will flower without special treatment when purchased. Planting and care for the amaryllis is the same whether repotting an old bulb or one that has just been purchased.

* Plant dormant bulbs anytime, keeping in mind they usually bloom 6-8 weeks after potting and initial watering.

* Using a container that contains drain holes and is 1" to 2" larger in diameter than the bulb base, pot your bulb using regular potting soil leaving 1/3 to 1/2 of the bulb above the soil. Amaryllis enjoys being slightly root bound.

* Water thoroughly immediately after planting. Keep soil slightly moist throughout the growing period.

* Grow your amaryllis indoors on a southern or western window exposure in a temperature of 65 to 70 degrees. Once flowering, cooler temperatures prolong the life of the flower.

* Fertilize using a water-soluble fertilizer such as Miracle Gro or Jack's, at the label recommended rate twice a month. Discontinue fertilization once the flower and leaves have browned.

Care After Flowering: The secret to success is to keep the plant actively growing after it has finished flowering. Remove any spent blossoms by cutting the stem just above the bulb. Leave it in a sunny exposure. During the next several months, growth is active and should be encouraged for future bulb development. Keep the soil slightly moist and fertilize regularly.

Reflowering: Continue to water and feed your amaryllis as you would any other houseplant to keep the leaves healthy and green. It can be set out on a patio or deck in the spring after all danger of frost has passed (around May 15). If moving it outdoors, place it in the shade for the first 2 weeks. Gradually increase the sun exposure until it receives 5 or 6 hours of sun per day. Stop watering around Labor Day. Set the pot in a cool, dark spot for the next 8 to 10 weeks to encourage dormancy. The leaves will yellow and wither. When the top of the flower bud begins to emerge, put the pot in a sunny area and start watering it again. Remove all dry foliage.