Growing and caring for amaryllis

Native to Africa, the genus *Amaryllis* comes from the Greek word amarysso, which means "to sparkle." Bulbs were brought to Europe in the 1700s and have been known to bloom for up to 75 years. However, the amaryllis bulbs we commonly purchase and grow as houseplants are hybrids of the genus *Hippeastrum* and are native to Central and South America.

Amaryllis flowers range from 4 to 10 inches in size and can be either single or double in form.

While the most popular colors are red and white, flowers may also be pink, salmon, apricot, rose or deep burgundy. Some varieties are bicolor such as purple and green, or picotee (having petals with a different edge color).

Quick facts

- Amaryllis flowers range from 4 to 10 inches in size.
- It is important to select healthy bulbs that are firm and dry with bright green growth and no damage.
- Plant Amaryllis bulbs in a narrow container with holes to promote drainage.
- Fertilize amaryllis each time you water at half the recommended strength when new growth is visible.
- Move the plant outdoors in the summer season to promote blooming.
- After Amaryllis' go through their dormant period, they require repotting only every 3 or 4 years.
- Careful inspection when purchasing bulbs accompanied by proper care will prevent most insect infestations as well as diseases.

Planting

Amaryllis grow best in narrow containers. Containers may be made of plastic, metal, ceramic or terracotta.

- Bulbs should be firm and dry with no signs of mold, decay or injury.
- Select a container that has one or more holes in the bottom and drains easily.
- Good drainage will minimize the chance of bulb or root rot (rotting from excess moisture).
- The diameter of the pot should be about 1 inch wider than the widest part of the bulb and twice as tall as the bulb to allow space for good root development.
- Fill the pot about half full with sterile, new potting soil high in organic matter such as peat moss.
- Set the bulb in the pot so the roots rest on the potting soil.
- The bulb should sit up above the edge of the container.
- Add more soil, tapping it down around the bulb, until one-third to one-half of the bulb remains visible.
- Firm the potting medium around the bulb.
- Set the pot in a sink where it can drain freely and water until the potting soil is thoroughly moist. Allow to drain completely.
- Set the pot on a saucer and place in a sunny window.

Caring for Bulbs

- Water the plant when the top 2 inches of soil feels dry, allowing the container to drain freely each time.
- Do not let the plant sit in water as wet soil can promote bulb and root rot and attract pests.
- Fertilize amaryllis each time you water at half the recommended strength when new growth is visible (including on newly purchased bulbs).
- To promote blooming, use a houseplant fertilizer with a high phosphorus content.
    - Fertilizer packaging always provides an analysis shown in three numbers such as 10-20-15.
    - These numbers represent the percentage of each of three important macronutrients for plant growth: N (nitrogen) – P (phosphorous) – K (potassium).
    - In this example, the fertilizer contains 10 percent nitrogen, 20 percent phosphorous, and 15 percent potassium.
- Move the plant out of direct sunlight when the flower buds have begun to open.

After-flowering care

The secret to keeping amaryllis thriving for years is to keep the plants actively growing AFTER they have finished blooming.

- After the flowers have faded, cut them off to prevent seed formation. Seed formation will deplete important energy reserves in the bulb and reduce blooming.
- Do not remove the flower stalk until it has turned yellow.
- A green stem will continue to promote photosynthesis, which creates energy that is stored in the bulb for future leaf growth and flowers.
- If the bulb does not produce a flowering stalk in the next blooming period, it is likely that has not stored enough nutrients during the post-blooming period.
- Keeping the plant healthy and growing will promote blooming.
- After your plant has finished blooming, place it in the sunniest possible location indoors. It will continue to grow long, smooth leaves. These leaves will promote photosynthesis.
- Continue to water and fertilize the plant regularly with an all-purpose houseplant plant fertilizer.

Keeping the plant healthy and growing throughout the summer will promote blooming later in the season.

- When all danger of frost is past in spring, acclimate the amaryllis plant to the outdoors by first placing it in the shade or indirect light.
- Gradually move the container to a location or garden bed where it will receive full sun for at least 6 hours daily.
- Select a sunny location on a deck or patio for your potted amaryllis, or just sink the entire pot into the soil in a sunny garden bed.
- It is not necessary to remove the amaryllis from the pot.
- Continue to fertilize monthly with an all-purpose houseplant or indoor plant fertilizer. This will help build up nutrients in the bulb for flower production the next year.
- Amaryllis plants should be brought indoors before the first frost in the fall.
- They will not survive frost or freezing temperatures.

Unlike some other bulbs, amaryllis do not require a rest or dormant period. They will bloom again if allowed to continue to grow. Bloom time can be controlled by allowing the bulb go dormant (stop growing) for a period of time. During this resting period (dormancy), plants use very little of their energy reserves.

- After bringing the potted amaryllis indoors, store the potted plant in a cool, dry, dark location such as a basement or closet.
- The temperature should be around 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Let the leaves become brown and dry before cutting them off.
- Leave the potted bulb in the dark for 8 to 12 weeks. Do not water during this time.
- Inspect the bulb periodically for mold or mildew. If found, treat with a fungicide or consider throwing away the bulb.
- If new growth appears during this time, remove the potted bulb from the dark location and place in a sunny window. Trim off any dead leaves. If after 8 to 12 weeks, no new growth has appeared, remove the potted bulb from the dark and place in a sunny location.
- Water and fertilize as noted above in After-flowering care.
    - This process will force the plant to bloom providing the bulb has sufficient energy to produce a flower stalk.
    - Usually, one or more flower stalks appear first, but occasionally they are preceded by leaves.
- Flowers usually develop in about 4 to 6 weeks from dormant bulbs.

Amaryllis plants bloom best when they grow in a container with little extra space (potbound). They require repotting only every 3 or 4 years. The best time to repot them is after they have gone through a dormant period.
https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/amaryllis

Video:
How to Plant Amaryllis Bulbs in 4 Easy Steps
Down to Earth Gardening and Design
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_uW3xL3bow



Amaryllis Red Lion



Amaryllis Christmas Gift



Amaryllis Apple Blossom