

Amaryllis

Amaryllis have 4 – 6 inch lily like flowers with heavy crisp petals. Colors range from white to red, with solid and variegated forms available. Bulbs may be purchased singly, sometimes in a starter kit including soil and pot, or as grown plants. However, bulbs grow each year so you can save money by buying smaller bulbs and caring for them over several years.

Amaryllis grow well in most houseplant soils, so long as the soil does not hold excessive moisture. A mixture of 1/3 vermiculite to 2/3 potting soil is adequate. Plant bulbs when they are dormant. For Christmas blooms, plant between October 25 and November 15. Later plantings will miss the holidays, but will provide color for the gloomy January and February days.

Plant the bulbs, wide side down, with 1/3 of the bulb above the soil line. Use a pot that is no more than 2 inches wider in diameter than the bulb. Water the soil well after planting, but do not drown the plant. Even moisture is essential for success. Drought checks the growth and excess moisture may rot the bulb.

Place the pot in a bright, sunny location where the temperature is 70 – 80 degree F, for quick sprouting. After growth begins keep the plant at average household temperatures. Fertilize on a regular basis. This encourages formation of next year's embryonic flower in the bulb.

After blooming, continue to grow the plant in a bright location, fertilizing on a regular basis. You may also set the pot of amaryllis in a semi-shaded spot in your outdoor garden after any danger of a spring frost. In late summer, stop fertilizing and gradually withhold water to force the bulb into dormancy. Before a late September frost, bring in the pot and cut off the leaves. Store the plant in a cool, dark place to rest for 2 or 3 months, before starting over. Bring the amaryllis into a warm, bright room and water moderately to begin new growth. Repot if necessary.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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