

Amaryllis



Amaryllis flowers brighten the bleak days of winter with beautiful shades of red, white and pink.

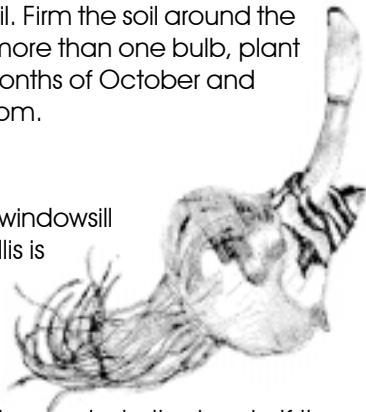
Planting a New Bulb

Select a pot which is 1½ to 2 inches larger in diameter than the widest part of the bulb. To allow for good drainage, place a piece of broken pottery (clay shard) or ½ inch of coarse gravel over the drainage hole.

Use a light commercial potting soil or mix two parts packaged potting soil and 1 part perlite. Position the bulb in the pot so that the top half (pointed end) is protruding above the soil. Firm the soil around the bulb and water thoroughly. If you have more than one bulb, plant them at two week intervals during the months of October and December to extend your period of bloom.

Temperature

Place the newly-potted bulb on a sunny windowsill in a cool room (60 to 65°F). If the amaryllis is grown in a warmer room the flower stalk may grow longer and require staking.



Water

Water only when the top layer of soil feels very dry to the touch. If the soil is kept too wet the bulb may rot. As the bulb develops roots the soil will dry more quickly and need water more often.

Growth & Flowering

Flower buds should emerge in 6 to 7 weeks, but this estimate may vary considerably, as each plant has its own schedule. Foliage may appear at any time before or after the flowers, depending on the variety. Once any growth begins, rotate the pot daily to prevent the plant from leaning toward the light. If the plant does need staking, be careful not to damage the bulb when inserting the stake into the soil. Once in bloom, prolong the flowering time by keeping the plant in a cool room and out of direct sunlight.

Feeding

Once the flower bud is visible, apply a water soluble fertilizer suitable for flowering houseplants at the rate recommended on the label. Stop fertilizing when the leaves start to turn yellow.

After Blooming

When the Amaryllis plant has finished blooming, place it in a sunny window and continue to water when the top layer of soil feels dry to the touch. It is essential to take care of the foliage since it will generate the food stored in the bulb for the following year's blossoms.

Summer Care

After the last frost (around May 15th in the Washington metropolitan area), sink the entire potted plant into the garden soil up to the rim of its pot in an area which receives direct morning sunlight but partial shade in the afternoon. Check the soil each day, and water when needed. Continue feeding. Occasionally rotate the pot to break off any roots that are growing out of the pot into the surrounding soil.

Early Fall

In early fall, gradually withhold water to jump start a period of dormancy. The plant can remain outside, in a sheltered spot, through the first frost. This will trigger dormancy and help to improve future bloom. When the leaves are yellow, slice off the leaves and flower stalk just above the bulb and stop all watering. Store the bulb in its container in a cool dry room (40-45°F) for about 6 weeks.

Reblooming

After the dormancy period, remove the bulb from its pot and trim the roots to reduce them by about 50%. Repot with fresh soil mixed with a teaspoon of bone meal. Water thoroughly and begin the cycle anew.

Propagation

Amaryllis bulbs should be repotted into the same pots until they outgrow them. After about three years they'll need a larger pot. While repotting you may notice offsets or bulbils, which are little side shoots that grow alongside the mother bulb. They can be detached and potted separately just like a mature bulb. These "babies" may take up to three years to bloom.

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