



# Growing Amaryllis

Amaryllis are popular flowering bulbs grown indoors during the winter months. Their spectacular, trumpet-shaped blooms can be 8 to 10 inches across and are produced atop an 18- to 30-inch-tall flower stalk. Flower colors include red, pink, orange, salmon, white, and bicolors. Single-flowering, double flowering, and miniature amaryllis varieties (cultivars) are available. Two to six flowers (the average is four) are produced on each flower stalk.

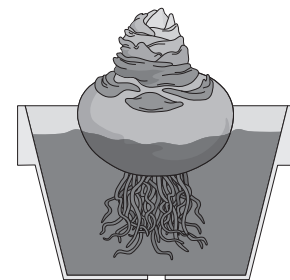
Although their flowers resemble lilies, the amaryllis belongs to the Amaryllidaceae family. Its genus is *Hippeastrum*. Amaryllis are native to tropical and subtropical areas of the Americas. Both the bulb and the plant are poisonous.



the soil in the middle of the pot. Then add additional potting soil, firming it around the roots and bulb.

When finished potting, the upper one-half of the bulb should remain above the soil surface. Also leave about one inch between the soil surface and the pot's rim. Water the soil thoroughly with lukewarm water and place in a warm (70° to 75°F) location.

Check the pot before watering a pre-planted amaryllis bulb. If the container doesn't have drainage holes, remove the bulb. Drill small holes in the bottom of the container and replant or transfer the bulb to a pot with drainage holes.



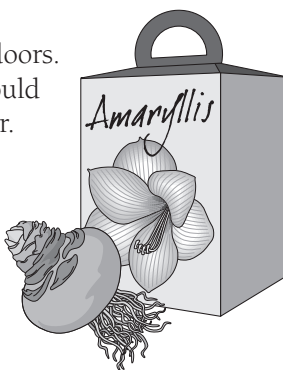
After the initial watering, allow the soil to dry somewhat before watering again. Keep the soil moist, but not wet. Don't overwater; once per week is usually adequate.

When growth appears, move the plant to a sunny window and fertilize every 2 to 4 weeks with a dilute fertilizer solution. During flower stalk elongation, turn the pot each day to keep the flower stalk growing straight. Flower stalks that lean badly will likely require staking.

Flowering usually occurs about 6 to 8 weeks after potting. When the amaryllis begins to bloom, move the plant to a slightly cooler (65° to 70°F) location that doesn't receive direct sun to prolong the life of the flowers.

## Forcing amaryllis

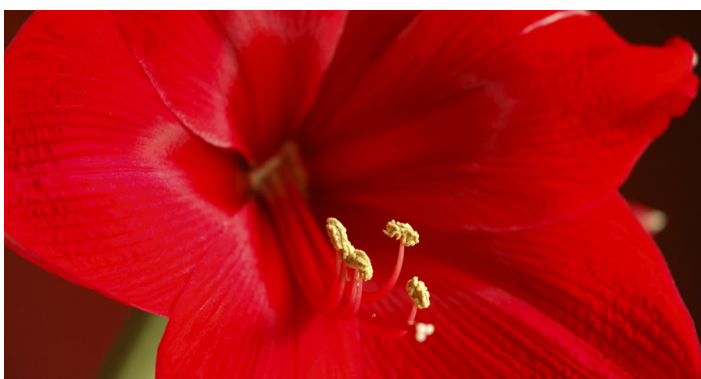
Amaryllis bulbs are easy to force indoors. Bulbs potted in early November should be in bloom by the end of December. Amaryllis bulbs can be purchased pre-planted in pots or unpotted. When purchasing amaryllis, select large, solid bulbs that show no sign of shriveling or decay. The largest bulbs often produce 2 flower stalks.



When planting an amaryllis bulb, select a pot that is approximately 1 to 2 inches wider than the diameter of the bulb. The container may be clay, ceramic, or plastic, but should have drainage holes in the bottom. Plant the bulb in good, well-drained potting soil. Add a small amount of potting soil in the bottom of the pot. Center the bulb atop

## Care after flowering

After the flowers fade, use a sharp knife to cut off the flower stalk about one to two inches above the bulb. Be careful not to damage the strap-like foliage. The foliage manufactures food to replenish the food reserves needed by the plant to produce future blooms. Place the plant in a sunny window and water when the soil surface is nearly dry. Fertilize every 2 to 4 weeks with a dilute fertilizer solution.



## Amaryllis cultivars

Many excellent cultivars are available.

Here are a few examples of single-blooming cultivars.

‘**Apple Blossom**’—white with pink feathering

‘**Christmas Gift**’—white with a green throat

‘**Minerva**’—red with white star

‘**Orange Sovereign**’—orange

‘**Picotée**’—white with red edge

‘**Red Lion**’—deep crimson red

Double-flowering amaryllis are also available.

‘**Aphrodite**’—white with pinkish red feathering

‘**Blossom Peacock**’—rose-red with white throat and midrib

‘**Dancing Queen**’—red and white striped

‘**White Nymph**’—white

Miniature varieties are only slightly shorter than their single- and double-flowering counterparts. However, their flowers are about half the width of the large flowering types. Here are a few examples of widely available miniature cultivars.

‘**Baby Star**’—deep red with a white star center

‘**Fairytale**’—white with raspberry red stripes

‘**Green Goddess**’—white with green center

‘**Neon**’—fuchsia pink with a white throat



For more information on selection, planting, cultural practices, and environmental quality—contact your Iowa State University Extension county office or visit one of these websites.

<http://store.extension.iastate.edu/>  
[www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu)  
[www.reimangardens.iastate.edu](http://www.reimangardens.iastate.edu)

Call ISU's Hortline at (515) 294-3108 (Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-noon and 1-4:30 p.m.)

If you want to learn more about horticulture through training and volunteer work, ask your ISU Extension office for information about the Iowa Master Gardener program.

Prepared by Richard Jauron, extension horticulturist.

The amaryllis can be moved outdoors in late May or early June. Harden or acclimate the plant to the outdoors by placing it in a shady, protected area for 2 to 3 days then gradually expose it to longer periods of direct sun. Once hardened, select a site in partial to full sun. Dig a hole and set the pot into the ground. Outdoors, continue to water the plant during dry weather. Also, continue to fertilize the amaryllis once or twice a month with a complete analysis soluble fertilizer through July. Bring the plant indoors in mid-September. Plants left indoors should be kept in a sunny window.

## Reflowering of amaryllis

In order to bloom, amaryllis bulbs must be exposed to temperatures of 50° to 55°F for a minimum of 8 to 10 weeks. This can be accomplished by inducing the plant to go dormant and then storing the dormant bulb at a temperature of 50° to 55°F. To induce dormancy, place the plant in a cool, semi-dark location in late September and withhold water. Cut off the foliage when the leaves turn brown. Then place the dormant bulb in a dark, cool (50° to 55°F) location for at least 8 to 10 weeks.

After the cool requirement has been met, start the growth cycle again by repotting the bulb in fresh potting soil, watering, and placing it in a well-lit, 70° to 75°F location. Keep the potting soil moist, but not wet, until growth appears.

Another option is to place the plant in a well-lit, 50° to 55°F location in fall. Maintain the amaryllis as a green plant from fall to early to mid-winter. After the cool requirement has been met, move the plant to a warmer (70° to 75°F) location.

When growth resumes, some amaryllis bulbs produce foliage, but no flowers. Amaryllis that fail to bloom may not have been able to store adequate food reserves in their bulbs in spring and summer. Others may not have been exposed to the proper temperatures (50° to 55°F for 8 to 10 weeks).

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