

Amaryllis Facts and Care

By: Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator

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Amaryllis is a popular holiday plant whose large colorful blossoms can be enjoyed long after the holidays. Here are a few facts about Amaryllis and some care and reblooming tips.

The plant we call Amaryllis and enjoy during winter is actually Hippeastrum. It is a member of the Amaryllidaceae genus and this is how it came to be called Amaryllis. A prettier name for marketing maybe.

On a side note, the only true Amaryllis is the bulb Amaryllis belladonna. Its common name is Naked Ladies because the pink flowers grow on stems bare of leaves. This is a hardy bulb for Nebraska that blooms in August.

While this article is about Hippeastrum, I will use the common name Amaryllis. It is easy to grow and blooms well indoors, not to mention the large beautiful blossoms. For these reasons, the National Garden Bureau has named 2023 as the Year of the Amaryllis.

When an Amaryllis bulb is purchased during fall, it has been forced. This means it received a cold treatment to help trigger blooming indoors.

When buying Amaryllis, check to see if it is labeled as grown in the Northern Hemisphere, such as Holland, or the Southern Hemisphere, like South Africa. According to the National Garden Bureau, Amaryllis bulbs from South Africa sold in the fall take three to five weeks to bloom, while bulbs from Holland take four to eight weeks to bloom.

Make note of where a bulb is from if you need it to bloom sooner or later. Also make note of bulb size. Larger bulbs usually produce more flower stalks or more flowers per stem. This is why larger, heavier bulbs are more expensive.

After buying an Amaryllis bulb, plant it in a container one to two inches larger than the bulb. Use a well-drained potting mix and plant so the top one-third of the bulb remains above the soil. Water thoroughly to moisten the potting mix and then wait for signs of growth before watering again.

Once growth begins, keep the soil barely moist. After a flower stalk forms, the soil should be kept uniformly moist but not overwatered.

The National Garden Bureau recommends lifting the pot right after planting and before watering to get a feel of its weight without water. To decide when watering is needed, lift the pot to check weight. While the soil surface may feel dry, there could be moisture deeper in the pot that will make it feel heavier.

Amaryllis require very bright light so place them close to a south window. After a flower has finished blooming, cut it off but leave its green stem. The green tissue will photosynthesize and act like another leaf. After blooming, keep Amaryllis in very bright light and water as needed. The plant is replenishing sugars and starches within the bulb for reblooming.

To rebloom Amaryllis, set the container outdoors after the danger of frost. Care for it as you would any outdoor plant. In early September, bring the plant indoors and store it in a cool, dark place until early November. Then repot the bulb into fresh soil and place it back in bright sunlight. Water as needed.

And just a final reminder, Amaryllis is really Hippeastrum and 2023 is the Year of the, well, Amaryllis.

Source: National Garden Bureau