

# Home Grounds Fact Sheet

## Amaryllis



One of the most spectacular blooming flower bulbs of all, it's no wonder that the amaryllis is becoming more and more popular. These plants, native to South Africa and South America, are highly-prized for their large, bold, and bell-like flowers.

Amaryllis are among the easiest, most dependable plants for blooming indoors. Nearly all of the plants are more correctly

referred to as the genus *Hippeastrum*, but the name "Amaryllis" is so firmly established that it will continue to be used.

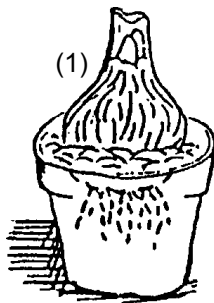
Inexpensive American hybrids come in white, various shades of red, scarlet, pink and white marked with red or pink. Named Dutch hybrids are magnificent in size and color. The latest on the scene are the South African hybrids, which often bloom naturally between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Bulbs are sold by many garden shops and plant suppliers either in a container ready to grow or as a bulb.

### PLANTING AND CARE

***Watching the flower stalks shoot up and the buds expand and open will keep your entire family in suspense.***

#### Planting the Newly Acquired Amaryllis Bulb

Place a piece of broken pottery (clay shard) over the drainage hole of a pot that is 1 1/2-2 inches in diameter larger than the widest part of the bulb. A suitable growing medium for amaryllis consists of two parts packaged potting soil, one part perlite and approximately 1 tablespoon slow-release fertilizer. Place the bulb so that the top half (pointed end) is protruding above the soil and the bottom half is below ground (see figure #1). After potting, water thoroughly.



***Blooms come along rapidly after you plant an Amaryllis bulb — some within 21 days.***

#### Care of the Bulb After Planting

Place the newly-potted bulb on a sunny window sill in a cool room (55-65° F). Water only when the top layer of soil in the container feels very dry to the touch. If the soil is kept overly moist, the bulb may rot. As the roots develop and fill the container, the top layer of soil will dry more quickly and the frequency of watering should be increased accordingly. In approximately 6-7 weeks, flower buds will emerge. They may appear before, during or after the development of foliage, depending on which hybrid is grown. Once growth begins, rotate the pot regularly to prevent the plant from leaning toward the light. If the amaryllis has been grown in a warm room the flower stalk may require staking to be held upright. Care must be taken not to damage the bulb when inserting a stake into the container. For longer lasting flowers, move the plant out of direct sunlight and keep it in a cool room after the blossoms have opened.

#### After Flowers Fade

As soon as blooms wither, remove flowers with razor blade or sharp knife flush with the stalk. DO NOT cut off flower stalk or any of the foliage (see figures 2 and 3).

It is essential to keep the foliage growing vigorously since it produces the food for the following year's blossoms. When the stalk begins to turn yellow, you can then cut it off where it emerges from the bulb, being careful not to injure leaves or bulb.



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continued

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### **After Danger of Frost Has Passed**

After the last frost, plunge the potted amaryllis into the ground so pot rim will be level with the surface of the soil, first placing some gravel at the bottom of the drainage hole to guarantee good drainage. The plant should be placed in an area which receives direct morning sunlight and partial shade during the afternoon. While the plant is outdoors, check the soil each day to see if watering is needed and regularly apply a water-soluble chemical fertilizer at the strength and frequency recommended on the label.

### **Before the First Frost**

Before the first autumn frost, bring the plant back indoors. By this time the foliage may have completely yellowed. If so, cut off the yellow leaves, withhold water allowing the soil to dry completely, store the bulb in its container in a cool dry room (40-45°F), and do not water for about 4 months. If the foliage is still even partially green, continue to grow the plant in a sunny window sill watering when necessary until all the leaves are completely yellow.

### **Forcing the Amaryllis to Flower Again**

After the bulb has been subjected to a 4 month cool dry period, carefully scrape the top pad of soil out of the container, replace it with fresh medium, water thoroughly, and repeat the process described above starting with "Care of the Bulb After Planting."

### **Propagation of Amaryllis**



The amaryllis can be propagated from offsets, which develop during the growing season and are attached to the "mother" bulb (see figure 4). When the bulbs are 1/4 to 1/3 the size of the mother bulb, they can be separated with the fingers or a sharp knife and potted separately. (Smaller offsets should not be detached.) Off-sets cared for exactly as described above will usually flower in 2 or 3 years. The best time to propagate the amaryllis is after the 4 month cool dry period.

***With careful handling, an Amaryllis bulb should bloom indoors for years to come!***