



Tips on Caring for Amaryllis

The Amaryllis is a true bulb that originated in the tropical areas of South America. Thus, it is a tender bulb. It performs best when grown under warm (70 to 75 F) temperatures for 9 to 10 months to promote flowering and vegetative growth, followed by 2 to 3 months of either cool (55 F) dry storage or cool (55 F) growing conditions. The use of one of the latter conditions is required to promote reflowering of the bulb.

They produce 2 to 6 flowers per floral stalk, with the average being 4. Very large bulbs normally produce 2 flower stalks. Flower colors are red, white, pink, orange, salmon, and bicolor (mostly whites with pink or red flushes). Plant heights range from 18 to 36 inches depending on the cultivar, the country in which the bulb was produced, and home forcing conditions. When properly handled and cared for properly, an amaryllis bulb may produce flowers for up to 75 years. Good quality bulbs of named varieties may produce up to six flowers on a single stalk



Location and Temperature

In the home, the plant should be kept in a well-lighted area. A southern exposure is best. When plant is flowering, keep it out of direct sunlight. This helps to promote a longer flower life. Temperatures -- Initially grow at 70 to 75 F until bulb begins to root and the leaves and floral stalk(s) begin to grow. Afterwards, any temperature from 65 to 75 F can be used. When growing amaryllis as a pot plant in the home, a southern window exposure provides ideal conditions for sun-loving amaryllis. An eastern or western facing window is second best, while plants grown in a northern window may require supplemental light.

Watering and Fertilizing After planting, thoroughly wet the medium with lukewarm water. Then keep it moist, but not wet. Don't over-water! Initially, once per week is usually adequate. Avoid watering over the bulb nose. Fertilization -- After the plant begins to grow, fertilization is essential. Use either a complete nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium (NPK) slow-release fertilizer. Fertilization determines the size and quality of the flowers and foliage. Any soluble or liquid fertilizer is satisfactory for pot plants, but use it at half the recommended rate. Apply liquid fertilizers at five to six-week intervals.

When actively growing during the summer months, use fertilizers containing low nitrogen, such as 5-10-10 or 6-12-12 analysis. A bulb booster type fertilizer can also be used. Avoid applying excess nitrogen because it promotes vegetative growth and reduces flowering.

Insects and Diseases Normally, when healthy bulbs are purchased, few diseases or insects are encountered. The major potential disease is Stagonospora (Fire or Red Spot). The insects that can become a problem are: mites, thrips, and mealybugs.

Getting the Amaryllis to re-bloom.

As stated before amaryllis can live for several decades. Normally amaryllis bloom only once a year. There are several tips on how to get your bulb to re-bulb. As soon as each flower passes its peak beauty and begins to fade, remove it by cutting the flower stalk two inches from the base. This will prevent a drain of food from other developing flower beds or foliage. Don't disturb the foliage because it produces the food for next year's. The growth is most active during the next two or three months and should be encouraged by ample water and fertilizer. When all danger of frost has passed, the plant may be plunged, pot and all, into the open ground in full sunlight, or it may be grown indoors in a bright location during the summer. Checks in growth during this period interfere with the proper development of the bulb in preparation for next spring's flowers. Gradually decrease watering late in summer when the leaves begin to turn yellow. Allow the soil to become completely dry when the foliage has died back. While in this dormant state, the bulb should be left in the pot and stored in a cool place, preferably at 40° F to 45° F. Do not water during the dormant period. For the plant to rebloom by Christmas, bring it into a well lit 70 degree room and begin to water. This should be done in early November so that the amaryllis will be flowering by mid December.

Why does my amaryllis fail to bloom?

Complete failure of the plant to flower, small flowers or poorly formed flowers, may result from several conditions:

- Excessive use of high nitrogen fertilizers
- Digging and resetting bulbs before they have matured. Maturity may be indicated when the foliage has yellowed and begins to droop.
- Excess shade may result in small flowers of poor color. Excess sun may cause bleaching of the flowers.
- Poor soil drainage and aeration.
- Bulb is not mature or large enough.
- Not allowing bulb to undergo proper dormancy (see article)

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