

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 21

Amaryllis

History

While commonly called amaryllis, this popular indoor bulb belongs to the genus *Hippeastrum*, which originated in Central and South America. The case of mistaken identity began in the early 1800s and continued into the 1900s; when the amaryllis became well known. Today, approximately 3.8 million bulbs are imported into the U.S. annually, the most common being *Hippeastrum hybridia*.

Description

Flowering in late winter or early spring, the amaryllis adds a vibrant splash of colour to any home. Pink, red, white and bi-coloured, trumpet-like flowers emerge on two-foot hollow stalks. Depending on the diameter of the bulb, an amaryllis may have three to six flowers per cluster, each flower being five to six inches in diameter.

Rich-green leaves emerge after flowering and thrive until late August. The foliage on the amaryllis is long and narrow, rising from the neck of the bulb. Because the bulb is large, the size of pot is important.

Potting

Amaryllis loves to be pot bound. When choosing a pot, make sure that it is an inch or two wider than the bulb and has adequate drainage holes. Before planting, place a layer

of rock at the base of the pot to prevent soil from falling out.

Fill half the pot with humus-rich potting soil; making sure the bulb is right side up. Place the bulb in the center of the pot, and gently push down. Then add more soil, leaving a third of the bulb above the soil level. Water the bulb thoroughly, set it aside and wait until the first sign of new growth appears.

Care

When a new shoot emerges, move the pot to a bright, warm room. At this point, water when the first few inches of soil is dry, and fertilize twice monthly with liquid fertilizer at half strength.

Once the flowers have faded, move the pot to a full-sun location; continue to water and fertilize as necessary. If the weather allows, take the amaryllis outside until late August. At this point, the foliage should turn yellow. Remove all dead foliage, and bring the pot inside before the first frost. To ensure a proper dormancy period, leave the bulb in the pot, and place it in a dark, cool spot for two months without water.

Amaryllis is one of the easiest indoor bulbs to care for as little attention is required. If properly maintained, it will provide years of enjoyment for everyone involved.

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