

How to Force Amaryllis to Bloom

Amaryllis is one of the most spectacular blooming flower bulbs. These plants, native to South Africa and South America, are highly prized for their beautiful large, bold, and bell-like flowers. Amaryllis is 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.

Planting your amaryllis bulb

Place a piece of broken pottery (clay shard) over the drainage hole of a pot that is several inches larger in diameter than the widest part of the bulb. A soil-based potting mix is suitable for growing amaryllis. Place the bulb so that the top half (pointed end) is protruding above the soil and the bottom half is below ground. After potting, water thoroughly.

Care after planting

- ❖ Place the newly potted bulb on a sunny windowsill 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.

Care during bloom

First and foremost, enjoy the beautiful blooms! Amaryllis can be kept cool, 55-60 degrees. These temperatures will allow the flowers to last a little longer. Weak stems may need staking. Keep up with watering and don't allow the plant to dry out.

After flowers fade

As soon as blooms wither, remove flowers and stalk with a razor blade or sharp knife flush with the stalk. **DO NOT** cut off any of the foliage. It is essential to keep the foliage growing vigorously since it produces the food for the following year's blossoms.

After the 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



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