



Amaryllis



The beautiful amaryllis is a favorite among gardeners. There are many varieties, ranging from miniature to gigantic flowers with single or double blooms. Colors can be an ethereal white or range in shades from red, pink, or orange--some even sporting multicolored or striped hues.

Tough and reliable bulbs, they don't need much attention. Now that it is a bit cooler in the Keys, it the perfect time to plant amaryllis in our gardens or in pots on the porch. Sun and shade tolerant, they do best in high, light shade or indirect sun. If grown in heavy shade they will flower poorly, and if grown in too much sun their leaves may turn yellow.

Amaryllis bloom in the spring at various times depending on variety, and some will produce blooms again in the fall. Grown in a pot, amaryllis will usually bloom six to ten weeks after potting. As they get taller, they may appreciate a little help staying upright by use of a stake.

Plant your amaryllis, pointed end up, in well-drained soil, leaving the neck above ground: one quarter to one third of the bulb should stay above the soil. Amaryllis like a bit of organic matter mixed into the soil (such as peat or compost). In the garden, plant the bulbs 12 to 15 inches apart in neat rows or allow a more naturalistic drift for a more casual effect. Water sparingly until you see growth; then keep them mostly moist while they settle in. They look fabulous when planted in groups of ten or so, raising their impact. They are also lovely as a cut flower!

Bulbs can be left in the garden all year long here in the Keys, but keep in mind if they get too crowded, they should be divided so that the bulbs can grow large. A large bulb usually means a large flower. A bit of mulch (don't cover the neck!) is nice for weed maintenance.

During the growing season of March through September, two to three light applications of a balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer with micronutrients is recommended. When amaryllis are actively growing and flowering, keep soil mostly moist, but allow to dry a bit in between watering. Once they are well established, they can tolerate some drought conditions. Too much water will reduce flowering and possibly introduce bulb rot. Avoid too much nitrogen as well, which will produce leaves at the expense of flowers.

Flowers will bloom in succession and last approximately two weeks, keeping your garden interesting. After blooms are finished but before seed heads have formed, remove the flower stalk or you will limit flowering the following season.

If you are growing amaryllis in a pot, be sure that the pot you have chosen is heavy enough to accommodate the height and weight of the flowering plant without tipping over. Also select a pot wide enough to allow for 2 inches of space all around the bulb at the top.

Our Propagation Department has a number of plants available for sale in the Courtyard during open hours, 9:30 - 2pm every day. Come and treat yourself to a new plant!



Article by Christa Varacalli