

## Amaryllis

These sophisticated bloomers are easy to grow and can last for years! Lets take a look at growing this stately holiday plant.

### Planting Your Bulb

- Choose a pot that is only **slightly** wider (1") than the bulb.
- One third of the bulb needs to sit above the soil level
- Choose a pot with enough depth so that the roots have several inches of soil below to grow.
- Make sure the pot has holes for drainage. Clay or ceramic pots are ideal because the weight helps to balance the blooming plant.
- Use a well-drained soil for potting. Just add water, warmth and sunshine (minimum of 4 hours).

### Growing Conditions

- Roots of Amaryllis do not like to be soggy, so let the soil dry slightly between waterings.
- About every 4<sup>th</sup> watering give it a general-purpose fertilizer (15-30-15).
- Growth of the bud stalks precedes the foliage and in 6 –8 weeks it should be in bloom.
- Once it begins blooming, remove from direct sun. If possible, put it in a cooler location to extend bloom time.
- Remove the blooms that wilt with age.

### Post-Bloom

- After it's done blooming remove the bloom stalks only, leave the foliage for vital photosynthetic functions.
- Return to warmth and sun and treat as a houseplant.

### Amaryllis continued...

- With time, leaves may begin to yellow, some or all of the leaves may fall off signaling dormancy. Move to a cooler (45–50 degrees), darker location. Cut back on the water. (Do not allow it to freeze!)
- The bulb should stay dormant 10–12 weeks before trying to revitalize it. After the bulb has been allowed to “rest,” bring it back to warmth, water and sunshine. (If growth appears before the dormant period is up, move it back into more hospitable conditions.)
- If you want to change pots, do it right after it's done blooming or at the end of the dormant period. Easy enough! The cycle begins again!



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## Holiday Plant Care

Tips for Growing Poinsettias, Christmas Cactus, Amaryllis & Paperwhite bulbs



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## Christmas Cactus

...aka Schlumbergera bridgessi, or zygocactus, are beautiful winter bloomers. They offer easy care and are long-lived, often being handed down from generation to generation.

### **Growing Conditions and Care**

- Requires little water when out of bloom, increase frequency when in bloom
- Prefers a bright area just out of reach of our intense Colorado sun
- If older plants are root bound, they should be re-potted into a pot at least 2" larger during July or August.
- Use a lightweight potting mix.
- A general-purpose liquid fertilizer can be applied during spring and summer months.
- After mid-September, run the soil dryer than normal, but don't let the soil constrict from the sides of the pot or let the leaves wither. You can continue to fertilize, but change to high phosphorous (the middle number) to encourage bloom.
- If your plant never blooms, it may need a brighter location. You can also try putting it in a room that is heated and dark during the evening hours.
- After the flowers have dropped, begin to water normally. In March, begin using a general-purpose fertilizer again.

### **Troubleshooting**

One of the biggest complaints about Christmas cactus is that they drop their buds before flowering. Once you see buds, **keep doing what you've been doing**. Don't increase or decrease water, fertilizer, or light. Place in a room without hot or cold drafts and make sure there aren't wet/dry extremes or day/night temperature extremes.

## Poinsettias

When choosing a poinsettia, look for well developed, fully colored bracts and flowers (the small yellow central parts) that are fully open.

### **Growing Conditions and Care**

- Water when plants are lightly dry. Do not overwater! If your plant comes in a container/foil without drainage, remove the outer cover to drain away excess moisture when you water. Poinsettias will quickly 'drown' if their roots sit in water.
- Place in bright location that receives indirect light for at least 6 hours per day.
- Grows best in warm temps (min 65 degrees)
- Avoid locations that have cold drafts or excessive heat (ex. doors, vents)
- Fertilizer is not needed while in bloom.

### **Getting Your Plant to Re-bloom**

Many people treat poinsettias as a seasonal decoration. However, you may keep your poinsettia all year as a houseplant. For re-bloom:

- Early April, trim back to about 8" in height.
- Water as usual.
- Fertilize with a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2-3 weeks.
- Your plant will show vigorous growth during the warm summer months. This is a good time to re-pot your plant into the next sized pot and to prune once more for shape. But, trim back PRIOR to September 1 to make sure new bracts have time develop.
- **Starting October 1**, poinsettias need **14 hours of continuous darkness** to initiate their colorful bracts. Stray light from a lamp or streetlight can stop this process. Nightly, move your plant to a dark room/closet or cover with a box. During the day, expose the poinsettia to at least 6-8 hours of bright sunlight.

- Follow these steps and in 8-10 weeks you should see your poinsettia in bloom!

## Paperwhites

Unlike typical 'spring' bulbs such as tulips, paperwhites (and Amaryllis) hail from warm climates and do not require several months of cold treatment to force a bloom. Their crisp white blossoms and heavy fragrance are a favorite for many.

Paperwhites may be planted two ways:

**No soil method:** In a clear dish or container (without drainage holes), add a layer of decorative gravel. Then place bulbs on top of this layer. Add additional gravel to support the bulbs but leave the tips exposed. Add water until it touches the very bottom of the bulbs. Maintain this level throughout the forcing period.

**With soil:** Plant the bulbs in a pot with soil (make sure the pot has drainage), leaving the tips exposed. Soak the soil well upon planting and then again when lightly dry.

### **Growing Conditions**

- Leave in a cool, dark location for 2-3 weeks, when shoots are 3" high, move pot to a sunny windowsill. Once blooming begins, move back from the window to a brightly lit spot out of direct sunlight (this will help prolong bloom time)

### **Post-Bloom**

Unfortunately, paperwhites are not hardy to our zone. So, you can't plant them outside post-bloom as with tulips or daffodils. Nor can they be re-forced. So, enjoy the show and then discard bulbs post-bloom.