UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

Q. What should I do with the Amaryllis bulb I just received?

A. Few flowers give greater satisfaction than the spectacular amaryllis. The flowers of this giant hybrid come in pure white, salmon, pink and white, rose, dark red and even green. Amaryllis are available from September to March as dormant bulbs ready for planting. They can be purchased as bulbs or as pre-packaged units complete with pots and potting medium. Shortly after planting one or two enormous flower stalks will appear. Flowers should appear in 3 to 4 weeks.

What is nicest about Amaryllis is that, unlike most forced bulbs, they require no a special pre-cooling, pre-darkened care. The buds are right there inside the bulbs, ready to emerge as soon as you plant and water. Plant amaryllis with about 1/3 to ½ of the bulb above the soil surface to keep the bulb’s nose dry. Use a well-drained potting soil, thoroughly water, and then place the bulb in a window that receives at least 4 hours of direct sunlight. Keep the soil slightly moist. As the flower stalk lengthens, rotate the plant every few days so it doesn’t lean toward the light. Moving your amaryllis to a slightly cooler location while it flowers will help prolong the life of the flowers.

The secret to successfully growing amaryllis is to keep the plants actively growing once bloom is finished. Remove flowers as they fade by cutting the stem off just above the bulb. Once the foliage appears, begin fertilizing twice a month using a soluble houseplant fertilizer. Water when the soil surface feels dry to the touch: once a week is usually sufficient. After all danger of frost has passed, you can move your amaryllis outside for the summer.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu

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