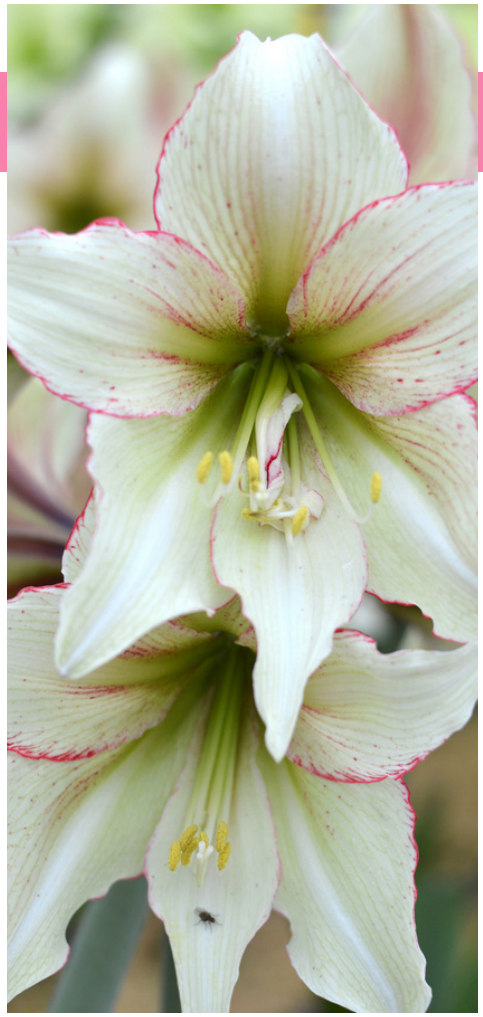
2023
YEAR OF THE
AMARYLLIS

The Amaryllis you decorate your home with during the winter holidays is a Hippeastrum. A Member of the genus Amaryllidaceae, Hippeastrum bulbs are native to Central and South America and include 90 species and over 600 cultivars; these plants are commonly called Amaryllis. In contrast, Amaryllis is a bulb native to South Africa with only one species, Amaryllis belladona, also known as “Naked Ladies” because of their pink flowers on stems without leaves. For our “Year of the Amaryllis” program we will focus on the Hippeastrum plants commonly referred to as Amaryllis.

Amaryllis (Hippeastrum) offered in the late fall through winter are used as forced bulbs to decorate and beautify the inside of homes during the winter. These easy-to-grow bulbs are being propagated in many parts of the world today. Garden centers, websites and garden catalogs often share where their bulbs were grown, whether in the Northern Hemisphere, like Holland, or in the Southern Hemisphere, like South Africa. Bulbs from South Africa available in the fall normally take 3-5 weeks to bloom, while the ones from Holland normally take 4-8 weeks to bloom. This information about bloom times may help you make appropriate choices when deciding which bulbs to purchase. Speaking of choices, Amaryllis come in a wide variety of colors and flower formations thanks to the hybridizers who are continuing to create more forms and colors.



Single flower – These are normally large flowers with six petals per flower; multiple stems and multiple blooms per stem; often one stem emerges at a time, giving a long bloom season, typically a month or more.

·Barbados – thick red petals with a bold white starburst.
·Gervase – variable coloration from flower to flower of white with pale pink, dark pink, red striped and feathering.
·Picotee – elegant crisp white flowers with just a hint of a red edge around each petal.
·Red Lion – large, bright red flowers perfect for brightening up any room.
·Rilona – large peachy, apricot-salmon flowers; darker in the center.

Double Flower– Large flowers with additional petals found within the outside six petals. Some petals curve into the center of the flower making it look more rose-like.

·Dancing Queen – Fully double red and white candy-striped flower with dark green leaves.
·Marilyn – a floriferous flower with lots of layers of pure white petals and a yellowish green heart.

Hybridizers of these extremely popular bulbs continue to create more types of ‘Amaryllis’ (Hippeastrum), often with different shapes and petal forms. Some, with their pointy, thin petals, resemble spider legs.

·Bagota - exotic, spider-type flowers; upper petals are deep red while its lower petals are lighter with a touch of salmon.
·Evergreen – tropical, spider-type flowers that are an award-winninggreen, quite unusual for this group.

Amaryllis is offered in assorted sizes, measured in centimeters in circumference (around the bulb). Larger bulb sizes normally produce more flower stalks or more flowers per stem. The heavier the bulbs, the more expensive it is. The largest size is sometimes called jumbo.

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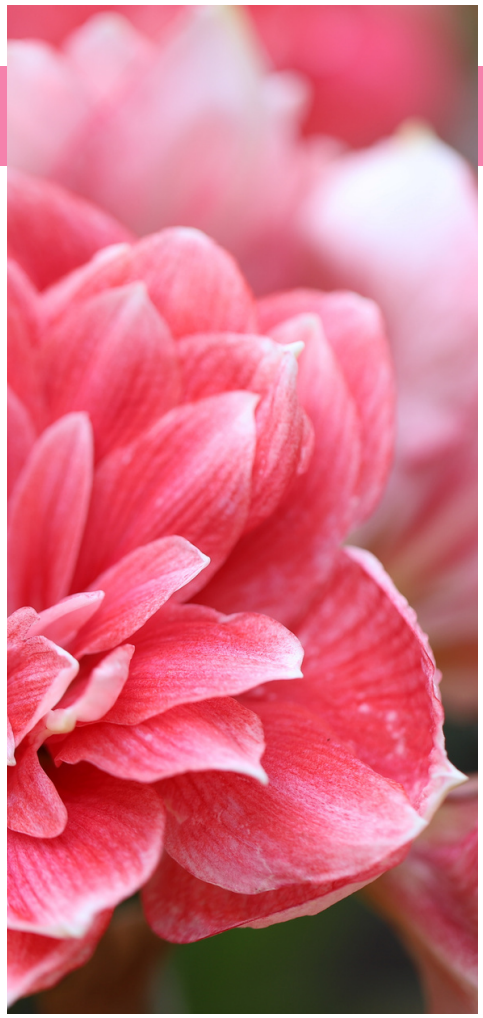
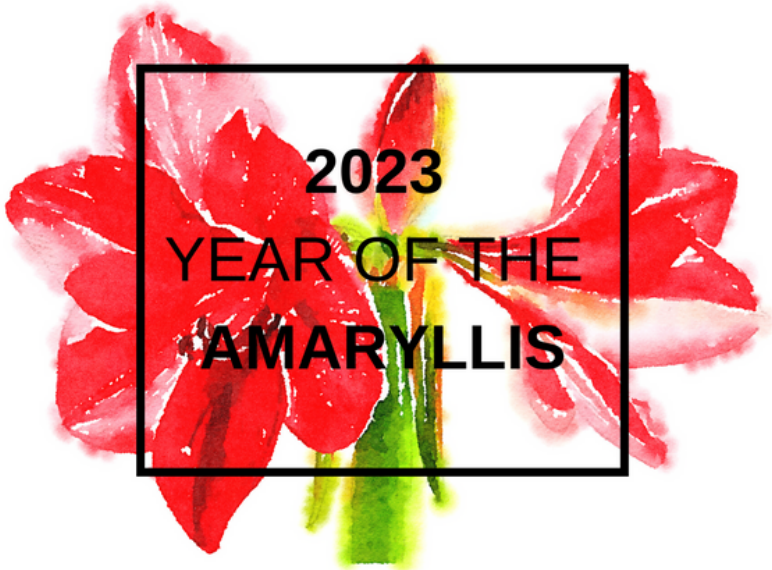


Planting information:

Use a good potting mix that includes bark to help with drainage. Place your bulb in the container with the top 1/3 of the bulb above the soil. Water once; do not water again until there is a sign of some growth, and then water only sparingly. Amaryllis need lots of light. Select a location with as much light as possible and add grow lights if possible. If not using grow lights, place your container where there is the most amount of natural light after sundown. This will keep it from stretching to reach for more light. Once the flower stalk begins to form buds, water as needed. (Hint: Lift the pot once potted but before the first time you water. This will give you a feelfor its weight without water. The top of the soil may feel dry but the weight of moist soil deeper in the pot, which makes it heavier, will help you know when the bulb needs to be watered). Once the flower has finished blooming, cut off the spent flower, leaving its green stem, which acts as another leaf.

Many good garden centers, catalogues, and websites offer ‘Amaryllis’ already in a container, ready to give as a gift. Some even have the bulb ‘waxed’ and growing. These can be found at ‘Breck’s Gifts,’ ‘Dutch Grown’ and ‘Gardeners Supply.’

Have a wonderful time researching, sampling, and sharing these amazing easy-to-grow bulbs! The options are endless!



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