

## AMARYLLIS

This plant is so fascinating that it merits top honours as a gift or for your own enjoyment. The newly purchased bulb has a perfect embryo flower already formed. All that needs to be done in the first year is to pot the bulb up and care for it until it flowers. Shortly after planting, a gigantic flower stalk shoots up and, within two months, four to six trumpet-shaped flowers, up to 10" across appear. Colours include white, pink, orange and red.

### Light

Amaryllis need bright light, with some direct sunlight, throughout the active growth period. During the dormant period, light is unimportant. Too little light when a plant is in active growth results in elongated leaves, and in no flowers the following year. A continuous position in bright sunlight from the time that flowers fade until mid-fall will contribute more than any other factor to subsequent flowering, and the pot may be placed outdoors for the summer. Bring it in, in the fall, keep it dry for two months and start the cycle again.

### Water

Water sparingly, just enough to keep the potting mixture barely moist until roots develop as indicated by the appearance of healthy new growth. Thereafter, water more moderately but let the top half of the mixture dry out between waterings. When plants are in full growth, water enough to keep the potting mixture constantly moist.

### Fertilizer

Apply balanced liquid or soluble fertilizer once every two weeks from the time the flowers have finished blooming until mid-summer. Then switch to a high-potash fertilizer. This will help to mature the bulb and ensure a flowering stalk the next year. Discontinue feedings entirely after mid-fall.

### Potting

Use a rich soil-based potting mixture and plenty of clay-pot fragments or surface in the bottom of the pot to aid drainage. New bulbs should be set single in 5" or 7" pots; half bury the bulb, leaving its neck and shoulders clear of the potting mixture. Soaking the base of dry bulbs for twenty-four hours in shallow saucers of water assists initial growth. The mixture should be settled firmly around the bulb and any existing roots.

The easy-to-care-for Amaryllis can bring so much beauty and pleasure to lighten the dull winter days.