KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

November 25, 2026

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Amaryllis Blooms for the Holiday

If you are looking to brighten up your home this winter, consider growing an Amaryllis (Hippeastrum). These classic holiday flowers are easy to get to bloom. You can purchase the bulbs at many garden stores and supermarkets. Try to select the largest ones available that are firm and dry. If growth is visible, it should be bright green. Each bulb should produce three to four blooms on a one to two-foot stem. Larger bulbs will produce more flowers.

Amaryllises grow best in tight spaces. Select a container about one-inch larger in diameter and twice as tall as the bulb with drainage holes in the bottom. Often the bulbs will come it kits with an appropriately sized pot. Hold the bulb over the container with the roots dangling to the bottom and add a sterile potting mix. Firm the soil around the roots carefully to avoid damaging them. Leave the top third to half of the bulb visible above the soil.

Put the container in a sink and water thoroughly. When the water has stopped draining, set the plant in a warm, sunny location. As the flower opens move the plant away from direct sunlight and to a cooler location to prolong the bloom period, which can last up to one month.

When blooming is complete, the amaryllis plant is still growing. Remove the bloom stalk to prevent the bulb from expending energy on seed formation. Move the container back to the sunny window. When the danger of frost has passed, you can gradually expose the plant to the outdoors by first moving it to an area with dappled shade. Over time move it to a location with six hours of full sun each day. Apply a balanced houseplant fertilizer monthly.

Prior to the first frost bring the amaryllis back inside and place it in a dark location. Stop watering it and when the leaves dry cut them off just above the bulb. Allow the bulb to rest for eight to twelve weeks with no water. When new growth appears or when you are ready to force the bloom, relocate the bulb to a sunny window and begin watering and fertilizing regularly. From dormancy to bloom it usually takes four to six weeks. Though amaryllises only require repotting every three to four years, the time to do this is after dormancy.