

Hippeastrum

Amaryllis

The *Hippeastrum*, often called *amaryllis* is usually brought into flower easily and these bulbs are very popular. Named strains, though a little more expensive produce flowers that are far more beautiful than those of bulbs sold in the super-market by color only. In the photograph you see from left to right: 'Belinda,' also shown on the next page, 'Fire Dance' and 'President Tito.' Other fine forms are the so-called 'Picotee' strains with a contrasting margin to the petals. These named bulbs are obtainable only from specialist growers through mail order. Usually it is possible to indicate the size of the bulbs required. Extra large bulbs may produce three or four flower stems.

Prepared bulbs may be potted as early as October. The pot should not be too much larger than the diameter of the bulb. Set the bulb so that about half of it is above the soil. Cover the pot with a plastic bag and place in a warm position, even above a radiator if it is not too hot. Water sparingly until bud appears, but make sure the soil-ball does not dry out. Increase watering as the bud grows.

When the flower stem has reached 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20cm) the plant may be placed in a well-lit window to flower. The leaves will not properly



Hippeastrum (continued)

start into growth until after flowering. If you want to keep the bulb for another season the foliage should develop at a minimum temperature of 70°F (20°C). The flower stem is cut off close to the bulb. Water freely and feed once every two weeks to replenish the bulb. From September on, gradually decrease watering until the leaves have died. Keep the bulb dry in the pot and store the pot on its side in a cool place. In January carefully replace the soil-ball with fresh soil and start into growth once more. A teaspoon of bone meal added to the soil will help. Bulbs will probably need repotting after three or four blossoming seasons. Small offset bulbs can be divided and planted in their own pots. Given regular feeding they should produce blossoms in two years.



Plenty of light but screen from bright sunlight.



Moderate: 50° to 60°F (10° to 16°C) at night. Keep the bulb at 45°F (6°C) in winter.



Water regularly in the growing and flowering season. From September on cease watering. Needs good drainage.



Moderate humidity.



Standard potting mix with additional humus. Feed monthly from January to September with mild liquid fertilizer.



HIPPEASTRUM

Amaryllis, Barbados lily

This genus contains 75 species of perennial bulbs and belongs to the Amaryllis family. Confusion often arises over *Hippeastrum* because its common name, amaryllis, is the genus name of another closely related plant in the same family, *Amaryllis belladonna*, the belladonna lily. Most often, though, the name amaryllis refers to *Hippeastrum*. The large trumpet-shaped blooms come in a wide range of colors, with accenting streaks and veining. A single bulb produces 1 or 2 flower stems, each bearing a cluster of 2 to 6 blooms which may last up to 6 weeks. Many hybrids are available.

H. puniceum, Barbados lily, grows to 24 inches (61 cm) tall, with bright green, strap-shaped leaves developing after the flowers; clusters of red flowers with green or white stripes may appear continuously.

H. reticulatum var. *striatifolium* features dark green leaves with creamy white midribs; fragrant blooms are bright red, appearing mainly in fall.

H. striatum 'Fulgidum', a continuous bloomer, produces crimson flowers with yellow centers and bases.

Soil: All-purpose mix.

Temperature: For 1 to 2 months before growth appears, keep cool, 55° to 60°F (13° to 16°C). Once growth begins, keep at 65° to 70°F (18° to 21°C).

Light: Before growth appears, set in dark location. Once active growth begins, gradually introduce bright light, with some direct sun, from

eastern, western, or southern exposure.

Moisture: Water newly potted bulb sparingly. As growth appears, increase water, keeping soil evenly moist. Mist daily. Humidity, 45% to 60%.

Feeding: Every 2 weeks during active growth, with compost or bone meal.

Grooming: Pot bulb, with top half exposed, 4 to 6 months before desired flowering. Blooms best when potbound; repot every 2 to 3 years. After flowering, cut off stalks.

Propagation: By offsets when repotting, or seeds.

Seasonal Care: After flowering, set outdoors. Bring indoors before first frost. Reduce water until foliage dies back, then withhold. Remove dead leaves. Store pot in dark, cool site, 50°F (10°C), until new growth appears. Then resume watering and provide light.