

How to Plant Amaryllis Bulbs Indoors: 5 Easy Steps

By: Raffaele Di Lallo



Do you want to know how to plant Amaryllis bulbs indoors? Luckily, it is super easy to do and, in this post, I will describe step by step, with photos, how to plant your bulb.

I've been growing these plants for many years, and I can't think of any other plant that easily grows indoors that has showier flowers than Amaryllis.

Note that this post does not address waxed amaryllis bulbs that are not meant to plant in soil. Those are meant to be disposed of after they bloom. For a plant that you can keep for years to come, do not purchase a waxed amaryllis bulb.

HOW TO PLANT AMARYLLIS BULBS INDOORS

1. Purchase the biggest bulb you can

Purchase the biggest bulb that you can afford. Choosing small bulbs will result in plants that are less vigorous and with less blooms. You will pay a little extra for a jumbo-sized bulb, but it will be worth it down the line! Amaryllis bulbs are typically sold in garden centers and stores in mid to late Autumn, or you can purchase them online from a number of different growers. When selecting a bulb, choose one that is firm to the touch.

Avoid buying kits that come with the bulb in a box. This will not allow you to inspect the bulb, and they are usual small and of inferior quality. If you've purchased a bulb and you can't plant it immediately, store it in a cool location between 40°-50°F (approx. 5-10°C).

2. Select an appropriate pot. There are two important considerations when choosing a good pot for your Amaryllis bulb:

POT SIZE

Amaryllis plants don't like their roots disturbed, and they do like to have their roots pretty constrained for the best display while blooming.

Here is how I choose the right pot size for Amaryllis bulbs:

1. Hold the bulb over near the very top of pot that you are potentially going to use.
2. Place the bulb right in the middle, and you'll want there to be about 2 inches or so from the widest point of your bulb to the edge of the top of the pot.

POT TYPE

There are many pros and cons to different pot types, but you'll want to choose a heavier pot and avoid lightweight plastic pots. The reason is because your plant will become quite top heavy when it blooms and as it subsequently grows a lot of foliage. My preferred pot type for amaryllis is terra cotta pots, but you can also use a glazed ceramic pot or a similar, sturdy, heavy pot. Whatever pot you choose should have a drainage hole. This is not optional!

3. Blend your potting mix

Amaryllis plants need a freely draining potting mix, so be sure to incorporate some coarse materials into your potting mix to improve drainage. A good rule of thumb would be to use 2 or 3 parts of your favorite all-purpose potting mix, along with 1 part of either perlite or pumice. There are some pros and cons to using perlite vs pumice, so choose what you're comfortable with. You can even incorporate LECA balls if you have them on hand.

4. Plant the bulb

First, place some soil at the bottom of pot and you'll have a little trial and error to get the right amount of soil in the pot, as well as the correct placement of your bulb. You'll ultimately want to leave about an inch from the final soil level to the top of the pot. This allows a water reservoir for when you water, and will contain the soil and not make a mess when you water. At the same time, you'll want to leave the top 1/3 to 1/2 of the bulb exposed. Don't bury the entire bulb under the potting mix. The "neck" and "shoulder" of the bulb should be above the soil line. Gently firm the soil down with your hands.

5. Water and place in sunny location

Lastly, give your pot a good watering, allow excess water to drain away, and place your plant in a warm, sunny window, the sunniest window that you have. You'll want to be careful with watering until you start to see growth coming out of the top of the bulb. Until you start to see growth, allow the top 3-4 inches to dry out before watering again. Once your plant starts actively growing, you can allow only the top inch of the potting mix to dry out. Amaryllis are sun loving plants, so place immediately in front of your sunniest window. Your plant will typically first throw out flower stalks and then leaf growth begins. Sometimes, both will appear at the same time. If you don't have enough light for your plant, the leaves will become weak, flimsy, and will flop over easily. Each bulb should grow at least one flower stalk, but many times they will even grow two (especially if you start off with a big bulb)! Each stalk typically produces 4-6 huge flowers. Be sure to rotate the plant frequently as it grows. The flower stalk will bend towards the window pretty quickly, so as you notice your flower stalk reaching to the window, turn it 180 degrees so it straightens out. When your flower buds start to open, you may want to position your plant so there is no direct sun shining on the actual flowers. This will prolong the life of the flowers. As the flowers fade, cut each one off. Once all the flowers on each stalk are spent, take a sharp knife and cut off the entire flower stalk at the base of the plant. **DO NOT CUT ANY LEAVES OFF** after your plant is done blooming! You'll need to allow your leaves to grow for several months before inducing a dormancy period.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AMARYLLIS

SHOULD I SOAK MY AMARYLLIS BULB BEFORE PLANTING?

It is not absolutely necessary, but if your bulb and roots seem really dehydrated when you purchase it, you can soak the roots and the base of the bulb in a bowl of warm water for a few hours before planting it.

WHEN SHOULD I START MY AMARYLLIS BULBS INDOORS?

Bulbs are typically sold in mid to late Autumn. If you'd like your plant to bloom around Christmas time, plant the bulb about 6-12 weeks before you want it to bloom. The timing varies depending on your growing conditions (light, temperature, etc.), so make a note of when you planted it and how long it takes to bloom so you can plan accordingly for the following year. If you want to speed up the rate at which your plant blooms, supplying bottom heat will cause it to grow more quickly. You can either place it on a propagation mat or simply on top of a radiator (as long as your plant is still in a sunny location).

DO INDOOR AMARYLLIS COME BACK EVERY YEAR?

Yes, they do! These plants can be kept indefinitely with proper care. Refer to my blog post on what to do with Amaryllis after blooming for more details.

HOW MANY FLOWER STALKS DO AMARYLLIS HAVE?

Typically, they will grow 1 stalk, or even 2, per bulb. Sometimes even 3! This all depends on how well cared for your plant is. Each flower stalk typically will have 4 flowers, but even up to 5 or 6.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CUT THE STALK OF AN AMARYLLIS?

After all the flowers on an individual stalk are withered, you can cut the entire flower stalk off. Simply take a sharp, sterilized knife and cut it right off at the base of the bulb. Do NOT cut any leaves off.

HOW DO YOU KEEP AMARYLLIS FROM GETTING LEGGY?

If your plant has weak, floppy leaves, it is due to insufficient light. Amaryllis plants are sun lovers so make sure to place your plant immediately in front of the sunniest window that you have indoors.

WHAT IS THE BEST FERTILIZER FOR AMARYLLIS?

Using a fertilizer with lower nitrogen, and one specifically made for bulbs, is a smart idea. These bulb fertilizers will feed your plant slowly over time and will nurture the health of your bulb and plant.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY AMARYLLIS DOESN'T BLOOM?

This is most likely due to your plant not having enough direct sun. These plants need a lot of direct sun in order to thrive, and they must be consistently fertilized with a good bulb food. If you've cut the leaves off immediately after blooming, this likely impaired your plant from blooming that year. Foliage must be allowed to grow and ripen for several months before a dormant period.