

notes from the garden

GROWING BULBS
INDOORS

It was during the Victorian Age that gardeners began their love affair with growing bulbs indoors. The sweet scent of paperwhites and the simple elegance of a single amaryllis bloom grown in a glass of water brought the spring garden indoors during the dark days of winter. And even the most novice of gardeners can plant and enjoy one of nature's simple pleasures.



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PAPERWHITES

Paperwhites can be grown without going through a cold storage period. Simply fill a shallow pot (3 to 4 inches deep) halfway with gravel, stones or soil. Choose bulbs that have some green shoots showing. Set the bulbs gently in the growing medium, pack more soil or gravel around the bulbs, leaving the tips visible.

Water thoroughly, allowing time for the soil or gravel to absorb enough water so that it is thoroughly soaked. If planted in water, be sure that the water remains below the base of the bulb.

Place your paperwhites in a cool (50 - 60 °) dark spot for 3 to 4 weeks or until the bulbs have budded. This allows the roots to develop and helps the flower stems stay shorter and thus less likely to fall over.

Place anywhere in the house, preferably in a windowsill where there is plenty of light and watch them develop into bloom. If the paperwhites do start to fall over, tie them with a raffia bow, support them with some twigs from the garden, or grow them in a tall vase.

AMARYLLIS

Amaryllis bulbs can be planted indoors anytime from September to May. Allow six weeks till the first bloom. Planting the bulbs at intervals of 2 weeks will give you continuous bloom all winter. Larger bulbs will provide you with more stems and flowers. Soak the bulb in a liquid seaweed (2T per gallon of water) solution overnight.

Choose a pot that allows good drainage and is no more than one or two inches wider at the rim than the bulb. Carefully plant the bulb with one-third of it above the rim of the pot. Water thoroughly after potting, then keep the soil only slightly moist. Keep in a sunny cool spot; turn a half turn each day to keep the stem from leaning towards the light. Remove the flower stalks just above the bulb nose when the flower fades. You will have at least one or two more blooms.

Amaryllis can be grown outside most winters here in north Texas. It is also possible to have the bulb flower again. After flowering, allow the leaves to develop. Water regularly and fertilize with liquid Bioform once a month. In early September, gradually reduce watering. Now place the bulb in a cool spot (55°) for a minimum of eight to ten weeks. Then repot and let the bulb bloom again!

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