

Giftable amaryllis

As the holiday season approaches, what's on the menu is in focus more than what's in the garden. However, indoor plants and gifts can brighten the season and keep gardeners' thumbs green. If you cannot be with loved ones this year, one plant that ships exceptionally well and provides cheerfulness after the presents are all unwrapped is amaryllis. An amaryllis also makes a thoughtful hostess gift at Thanksgiving.



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Derived from the Greek amarysso, meaning "to sparkle," amaryllis is the common name for plants in the Hippeastrum genus. There is also a genus Amaryllis, which, confusingly, is not the same plant. The large, fat bulbs of amaryllis are easy to find this time of year in grocery stores, garden centers, big box stores and online retail offerings. Bulbs come loose, in a kit, or potted, and take about six to eight weeks to bloom. The bulb should be firm and free from mold growth. Plant amaryllis in a container that is

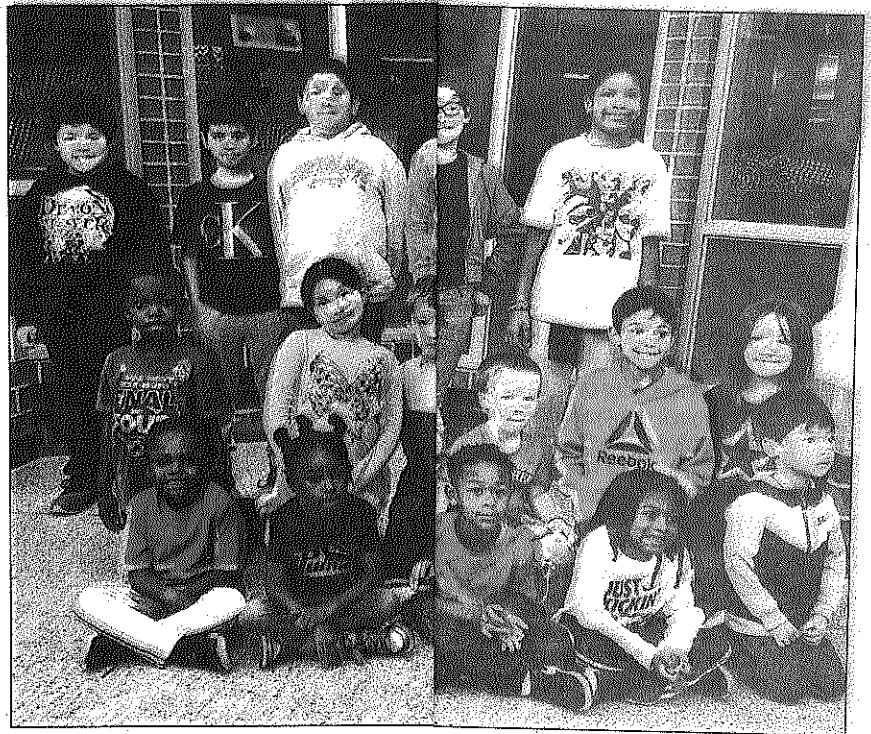
only slightly larger than the bulb, with the top one-third to one-half of the bulb exposed above the soil. Water about once per week, taking care not to pour water directly on top of the center of the bulb. Place in a bright, sunny window and occasionally rotate the plant to keep the stalk from leaning dramatically towards the light.

Don't be disturbed by the time commitment. Amaryllis bulbs are easily maintained and produce impressively grand blooms for minimal effort. Amaryllis is an almost foolproof plant to grow, and its fast-growing flowering stalk is amusing. First-time growers will marvel at the pace of growth as the stalk elongates .5 to 1 inch taller each day. For information on growing amaryllis and transitioning them to the garden, see the online factsheet HGIC 1551, Amaryllis.

Hundreds of Amaryllis cultivars have been developed since the late 1700s, when breeding within the genus began. The variety of colors and flower forms is broad enough to suit any preference. Recent research suggests plants in the genus Hippeastrum produce many different alkaloid chemicals that could have the potential for pharmaceutical use. Unfortunately, this also means that amaryllis can be toxic to pets, especially if they chew the bulb, which can cause ill effects. Regardless of its past development or future in medicine, growing amaryllis is a tradition that will continue during the holidays. Maybe we can get those pesky elves off their shelves to pitch in on watering?

The Abbeville Extension Fruit, Shrub, and Tree sale is ending soon. Orders and payments must be received by Nov. 15. Contact abbevilletrees@clermson.edu or Stephen Pohlman at spohlma@clermson.edu for the pricelist and ordering instructions.

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Terrific Kids for October

October Kiwanis Terrific Kids from Math

Submitted by Lara Hudson