

Amaryllis 'recipe' from a friend

Provided by Carol Kinsley, Mid-Atlantic Grower for viriniagardening.com

The late Mary Swaine of Royal Oak, Md., who wrote a gardening column for The Delmarva Farmer for many years, had a "recipe" for growing amaryllis that almost guarantees success. I think she'd be pleased if I shared it with you, and if you want to share it with others, be our guest!

In the **early fall, the final week of September, lift the bulb from the garden.** Shake off as much dirt as possible. Cut tops off to about 2 inches above the top of the bulb. Place in a dry, airy location out of the sun. When all the dirt can be removed do so.

No earlier than the middle of November, you may plant your bulb for winter in the house blooming. Do not plant for a minimum of five weeks after you have dug the bulbs in the fall. Cut the roots back to about 2 inches in length. Then place the bulb in a dish of water so that the bottom of the bulb is in the water. Soak it thus for 24 hours. Then plant it in a good mixture of potting soil. If you use commercial soil, work some good rich garden soil into it before planting. If you mix your own potting soil, use one-third clean sand, one-third garden soil and one-third compost (the latter well rotted). Be sure not to get any worms in the soil.

Plant the bulb so that at least half the bulb is above the soil line. It should be planted in a pot large enough so that there is about an inch of space between, the sides of the bulb and the pot. If the pot is large enough, plant two or more blooming size bulbs in one pot along with some smaller amaryllis bulbs, for a much better display of flowers.

Water so that the soil is nicely moist (but not flooded). Place pot in a warm location out of drafts. Until the bulb begins to sprout, water only from the bottom. Do not permit the pot to stand in water for more than three hours. Once the bulb has sprouted, water as needed (may be daily). Once a week, water with a light mix of fertilizer (say one teaspoon of Miracle-Gro per gallon of water) to help the bulb produce good growth and large flowers.

After blooming is over, continue to care for the bulb in this same manner until it is planted out into the garden in the spring.

After all danger of frost, about the **end of April, plant amaryllis bulbs out in a sunny location** in your garden. Knock the bulbs out of the pot before planting. Plant so half of the bulb is above the soil level. During the growing season, fertilize several times with an all-around fertilizer.