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CARING FOR YOUR AMARYLLIS AFTER IT BLOOMS

Your amaryllis bulb has just invested all its energy in producing flowers. It now Needs plenty of water, fertilizer, and sunshine to allow its leaves to carry on the process of photosynthesis and replenish the bulb's food supply.

Pinch off spent blossoms so the plant doesn't waste energy forming seeds. Don't remove any foliage yet. Move the plant to a sunny window, continue to water as needed, and fertilize twice a month to promote healthy leaves. The more leaves the plant grows in summer, the more flower stalks it will be able to produce the following winter. If you wish, move the pot outside once spring has truly arrived, or put it in a greenhouse or on an indoor windowsill. Try to find a spot where it will receive at least four hours of sunshine each day.

Dormancy and Storage To some extent, each amaryllis bulb seems to set its own timetable for going dormant and then reblooming. Usually, however, the foliage begins to turn yellow and die back by late August (sometimes later, sometimes earlier), signaling the beginning of the plant's dormant stage. When this happens, stop watering and fertilizing. If you had set the pot outside over spring and summer, lay it on its side so that rain won't moisten the soil and bring it in before the first hard frost. Cut off the dead foliage and store the bulb, still in its pot, in a dark, cool (about 55 degrees) spot such as a basement for about two months.

Revival Begin awakening your amaryllis bulb from its rest six to eight weeks before you want it to bloom again. Gently remove the top inch of soil with a spoon and replace it with fresh potting soil. Then water the plant well and fertilize. Follow the same schedule of care as last year to bring the plant into bloom and through the summer again.

An amaryllis may refuse to bloom again if its roots have been disturbed too often, so don't repot unless the bulb looks really crowded (once every three or four years is usually enough). You'll disrupt the plant least if you repot it at the start of the revival, or new-growth period.

Occasionally miniature plants (called "pups") appear around the mother bulb. If you want a clump of amaryllis in one pot, leave them be. If not, you can remove them and pot them separately at the beginning of the new-growth stage. Pups develop slowly but should bloom once they are three years old.

Sometimes despite your best efforts a revived amaryllis bulb sends up new leaves but no flowers. Don't despair! If the plant seems healthy and strong, give it another chance by carrying it through another growing season – it may just need more time to gather the strength to rebloom.