

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Amaryllis is a popular bulb that is providing a stellar performance in many local landscapes over the month of April. Few flowering bulbs can surpass the stately beauty of the amaryllis. Amaryllis readily adapts to our Gulf Coast landscapes and once established can become a long-lasting part of the landscape with minimal care.

Most plants in local landscapes are probably hybridized forms of amaryllis. This flowering bulb was first discovered by Eduard Poeppig, a young physician from Germany, while on a

plant hunting expedition in Chile.

Although we frequently see these beautiful plants for sale in pots around Christmas time, they can be raised very successfully out of doors in our mild climate.

Amaryllis grows from a large, multi-layered bulb that is very similar in appearance to the onion. Amaryllis produces large, trumpet-shaped flowers, growing as large as eight inches across in clusters of two-to-six flowers per stem. The leafless, hollow stems can grow to be two to three feet tall.

Although the dominant

flower color of amaryllis growing in local landscapes is red other colors include shades of orange, pink as well as white and striped ones. Remove dead blooms before seeds are produced. If not, flowering the following season will be likely be reduced. Removing dead blooms also helps to maintain the aesthetic value of the planting.

Amaryllis thrive in any reasonably good garden soil including our gumbo clays as long as drainage is good. Some garden articles recommend that amaryllis bulbs be planted in an area that



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News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.



receives part sun (about six hours of direct sun and then shade in the afternoon), but you are likely to see amaryllis thriving in full sun to part shade in our area.

Once planted and established, amaryllis can be left alone for years. A light sprinkling of a general-purpose fertilizer in March and June and watering during unusually dry weather are all they need.

Beds should be mulched with an inch or two of shredded pine bark or other similar organic mulch to help reduce weeds and conserve moisture.

The bulbs may be left in the ground for several years (typically for 2-to-4 years of growth) then divided in the fall season. This is one tough plant and I have divided my amaryllis in late winter (February) and plants still produced a respectable mass of flowers in late spring.

Amaryllis may be dug and reset every September or October. While it is not necessary to dig, separate, and replant each year, but doing so will encourage uniform flowering and larger blooms. Digging also provides an opportunity to discard unhealthy bulbs, to increase your plants by removing and replanting young offsets (bulblets) and to amend the bed with organic matter.

Whether you've never had an amaryllis before, or you have been growing them for years, amaryllis is a good investment for providing striking and dependable flower color in April landscapes.

Gardeners Q&A

Question: I have a grapefruit tree that has been planted for about a year. It is now producing flowers. I

was told by a friend to remove the flowers to make the tree stronger for the future.

Answer: Technically, the advice you received was sound. You will indeed increase future growth and fruit production by removing the flowers now. And a commercial grower with many acres of year-old citrus trees would be well advised to thin out or eliminate flowers and small fruits during the first year.

But let's face it. We usually buy plants to enjoy. And with citrus much of the enjoyment comes from harvesting fruit from our own trees. The amount of reduction in future growth and production is relatively minor. And for one or two trees in your back yard, the reduction in production would barely be noticeable. I wouldn't worry about removing all fruit the first year but I would not allow the tree to carry a heavy load to full production. Just leave two or three fruits to enjoy and you will not overstress your tree.

At a Glance

TOPIC: Rainwater Harvesting

DATE: Tuesday, April 30

TIME: 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

SPEAKER: Master Gardener Tim Jahnke will provide a PowerPoint presentation on rainwater harvesting. Rainwater harvesting is the accumulation and storage of rainwater for later use. It can be as simple as catching rainwater in five gallon buckets to more elaborate systems that collect thousands of gallons of water for reuse. Collecting rainwater can provide high quality water for watering plants, pets and wildlife. Tim will discuss and show ways humans

have collected the precious resource of rainwater for more than 5000 years with information on current applications for today's gardener.

PRE-REGISTRATION: Required to ensure availability of educational handouts (e-mail GALV3@wt.net or 281-534-3413, ext. 12)