

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: Dr. William M. Johnson

**Amaryllis is a popular bulb that is providing a stellar performance in many local landscapes despite freeze injury sustained by leaves from multiple cold snaps during winter. Few flowering bulbs can surpass the stately beauty of the amaryllis.**

Amaryllis is a popular bulb that will be providing stellar performances in many local landscapes over the coming weeks. Even though the leaves of amaryllis plants were frozen back to the ground from the cold snaps in January, the below-ground bulbs rapidly generated new growth that will produce spring flowers. Few flow-

ering 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 hy-

bridized 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



March 28, 2018



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



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 thrives 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 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 in September or October. While it is not necessary to dig, separate, and replant each year, 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**

**Q: All of the flowers on my citrus trees dropped soon after the freeze that occurred a few weeks ago. Does that mean my citrus plant will not produce any fruits this year?**

A: Do not expect any fruit pro-

duction if the flowers froze. However, if the citrus tree is sufficiently mature (especially if it has produced fruits in prior years) and is otherwise healthy, there is basis for hope that the tree may still produce some fruits during the growing season if it produces another flush of flowers which depends on the type of citrus. As a general rule of thumb, the smaller the type of fruit, the more often it blooms. For example, some limes and lemons can set blooms up to four times a year, while the citrus blooming season for larger sized citrus fruits (such as grapefruits and navel oranges) is only once in the spring.

**Q: Is it time to fertilize my lawn?**

A: Mid-March to mid-April is the recommended time period to fertilize lawns. A good way to determine when to fertilize is to wait until you have mowed the lawn grass twice within a 10-day period. I plan to fertilize my lawn over the coming weekend.

If you fertilize too early, you will be fertilizing the winter weeds! This allows time for your lawn grass to green up naturally without pushing it into growth. Use a 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer (such as 15-5-10) and distribute with a broadcast (cyclone) spreader. Uniform distribution is essential to prevent light and dark streaks in the lawn.

