

# Amaryllis Provides Dependable Flower Show

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTOS BY **William M. Johnson**



**March 30, 2016**



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

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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 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 every 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: 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 with a 10-day period.

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.

**Q: My azaleas are still blooming. When should I fertilize them?**

A: Wait to fertilize azaleas until after the major bloom season is finished. Consider using a fertilizer specially formulated for azaleas, which provides plant nutrients in the right ratio and also helps to maintain acid soil conditions needed by azaleas. Because azaleas have a shallow root system, many gardeners have found it to be beneficial to apply several light fertilizer applications over time rather than all at one time.

