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Photo courtesy of Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center (NFBC)



*Hyacinthus orientalis*  
Hyacinth, Dutch hyacinth,  
Common hyacinth, Garden hyacinth

## BOTANICAL NAME

*Hyacinthus orientalis*  
(hy-a-SIN-thus or-ee-en-TAL-is)

## COMMON NAMES

Hyacinth, Dutch hyacinth,  
Common hyacinth, Garden hyacinth

## DESCRIPTION

Hyacinths are herbaceous perennials that grow from bulbs. Their fragrant, waxy bell-shaped florets form in large spikes on the upper 4 to 6 inches of thick, fleshy and leafless stems (scapes), which grow 8 to 12 inches in length. Hyacinth inflorescences typically bear 30 to 70 florets; the number is dependent on the size of the bulb. Larger bulbs, which generally produce 60 to 70 florets, are most often used for indoor potted plants.

## COLORS

Hyacinths are available in a range of pinks (pale pink to hot pink), blues (light blue to dark blue and blue-violet), and violets (lavender to dark purple) as well as red, salmon/peach/apricot/coral, yellow and white/ivory.

## DECORATIVE LIFE

Potted hyacinths typically last one to two weeks at the consumer level, depending on their maturity at the time of sale and the environmental conditions in which they're displayed.

## AVAILABILITY

Hyacinth plants are most readily available from January through April although some suppliers force them for the December holidays.

## varieties

Around 100 cultivars of hyacinths are commercially cultivated, but around 25 of them represent nearly 90 percent of the total world production.

## in-store and consumer care

**LIGHT** Bright indirect light is required; protect plants from direct sunlight.

**WATER** Keep compost evenly moist at all times, watering lightly but frequently.

**TEMPERATURE** Cooler environments (55 F to 65 F) are best for displaying hyacinth plants—never higher than 70 F.

**HUMIDITY** Hyacinths prefer moderately humid environments. Occasional light misting or placing pots on pebble trays can provide the required humidity.

**STORAGE** These plants can be stored for up to five days in a floral refrigerator at 33 F to 36 F.

**FERTILIZER** None is required, but a liquid bulb-plant fertilizer added to the water helps support longer-lasting flowers.

**GROWING MEDIA** Hyacinths can be grown in fast-draining soil, pebbles, marbles or water. When grown in water, the roots should be

suspended in the water, with the bulbs remaining above the water line. Hourglass-shaped hyacinth vases are ideal for hydroponic growing.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Hyacinths are not particularly sensitive to ethylene gas.

**REBLOOMING** Cut off flower heads but not the stems. Continue watering and feeding until the leaves have withered. Remove the bulbs from the pot, and allow them to dry. Then cut off the dead foliage. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place. Replant them outside in the fall; forced bulbs will not rebloom indoors.

**CARE EXTRAS** Hyacinth stems often require staking to hold up the top-heavy flower stems. To prolong flower life, instruct consumers to move pots into the coolest rooms in their homes at night.

## challenges

**YELLOW LEAVES** Drafts are the usual reason, but incorrect watering and/or insufficient light also can be causes.

**SKIN IRRITATIONS** Hyacinth bulbs can cause skin irritations in some people. Advise customers of this possibility, and caution them to wash their hands if they touch the bulbs.

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** The genus name *Hyacinthus* was given to these bulb flowers in honor of Hyakinthos, a youthful Spartan prince of great beauty in Greek mythology who was accidentally killed when he was hit in the head by a discus thrown by the Greek god Apollo. The specific epithet "*orientalis*" means "from the Orient" or "Eastern."

**FAMILY MATTERS** *Hyacinthus* is a member of the *Liliaceae* (lily) family. Close flower relatives include lilies, lilies-of-the-valley, glory lilies (*Gloriosas*), grape hyacinths and stars-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum*).

**HOME SWEET HOME** Hyacinths are native to the western Mediterranean region, from Greece through Asia Minor (Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon and Israel) and North Africa (Egypt and Libya). **sfr**

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