



Photo courtesy of the Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center



Hippeastrum 'Minerva'
Amaryllis, Barbados lily

BOTANICAL NAME

Hippeastrum spp. (hip-ee-AS-trum)

COMMON NAMES

Amaryllis, Barbados lily

DESCRIPTION

Amaryllises' showy blooms are trumpet shaped and range from 3 to 8 inches in diameter. There are generally three to five blooms atop of each stem. Blooms can be single flowered, with 6 "petals"; double flowered, with 12; or triple flowered, with 18. Some new hybrids have narrower petals, giving the blooms a spidery/lilylike appearance. Stems are hollow, leafless, light green and typically range from 16 to

30 inches in length.

COLORS

(See "Colors" on Page 20.)

VASE LIFE

Amaryllises can last eight to 14 days, depending on variety and care, with individual blooms lasting two to five days each.

AVAILABILITY

Today, because of new varieties and global markets, cut amaryllises are available almost year-round; however, peak commercial production occurs from around October through March or April. Check with your favorite supplier(s) for availability.

vase-life extenders

PROCESSING Immediately remove amaryllises from the shipping boxes, and check flower quality. Recut the stems, on an angle, with a sharp knife, removing at least 1 inch of stem. Immediately after cutting, dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution, then place them into containers with 4 to 6 inches of properly proportioned room-temperature *bulb-flower-food* solution.

REFRIGERATION Amaryllises are tropical bulb flowers (see "Fun Facts: Home Sweet Home"), so they prefer refrigeration at temperatures between 41 F and 50 F. Allow them to hydrate in the cooler for at least two hours before using or selling them. If open blooms are needed quickly, store these flowers out of the cooler, at room temperature.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY (See "Purchasing Advice" on this page and "Blooming Plant of the Month: Challenges" on Page 20.)

CARE EXTRA Amaryllis stem ends are prone to splitting and curling; however, some research suggests this can be reduced by placing the stems into a sugar solution (made with 2 tablespoons per quart of water) for 24 hours prior to sale or use. Some florists also wrap the bases of the stems with waterproof tape to prevent the problems.

CONSUMER ACTION Instruct customers to recut the stems and to change the vase

solution every other day using the bulb-flower nutrient you provide. Also advise them to cut off blooms as they fade, to carefully remove pollen-bearing anthers as soon as blooms open, and to keep the flowers out of direct sunlight and warm and cold drafts.

TOXICITY ALERT All parts of these bulb flowers can cause minor illness, if ingested, so keep them out of the reach of children and pets.

design tips

To arrange amaryllises into floral foam, follow these steps.

- Always place amaryllises into designs before any other flowers or foliage.
- Wrap the bases of the stems with waterproof tape to prevent splitting.
- Invert the flowers, and fill the hollow stems with bulb-flower-food solution.
- Insert two plant stakes so they extend beyond the stem ends.
- Plug the stem ends with cotton.
- Turn the flowers upright, and insert the stakes into the floral foam, bringing stem ends into contact with the wet floral foam and gently pressing them slightly into the foam.

Some information provided by:

Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson

Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflife.org

Dictionary of Plant Names, by Allen J. Coombes

Hortus Third

by Liberty Hyde Bailey and Ethel Zoe Bailey

Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners

by William T. Stearn

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME "*Hippeastrum*" is said to derive from the Greek words *hippos*, for horse, and *astron*, for star, because the blooms once were considered to resemble a horse's head, at a certain stage in their opening, and because of the star-shaped form of the open flowers.

"Amaryllis" was the name of a lovelorn shepherdess in Greek mythology who pierced her own heart to produce a new flower from her blood, to attract the attention of a flower- and plant-loving shepherd she desired.

FAMILY MATTERS The genus *Hippeastrum* is a member of the *Amaryllidaceae* family. Close relatives include *Clivia*, *Eucharis*, *Narcissus* and *Nerine*.

HOME SWEET HOME Amaryllises are native to the Caribbean region and to tropical and subtropical South America (Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina).

purchasing advice

- Look for stems with puffy, undamaged buds that are just showing color. One or two buds can be just starting to open. Avoid stems with mold, rot or brown spots on the blossoms or stems.
- Amaryllises are extremely sensitive to ethylene gas, so make sure the flowers you purchase have been treated with an ethylene inhibitor at the grower level or during transportation. Buy only from a grower or supplier whose veracity you can trust. **sfr**