



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/amaryllis-blooms-for-the-holidays>

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Holiday blooms need to be planted soon

Popular amaryllis known to produce 3-4 blooms during the season

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan – 'Tis the season to start thinking about decking the halls with holiday décor, which may include some of the season's most colorful flowers.

"Now is the time to start amaryllis if you wish to have them in bloom for Christmas," said Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini.

Amaryllis, genus name *Hippeastrum*, are ready to bloom when purchased. *Hippeastrum* means "horse star" which is an appropriate name since this plant can produce blooms as large as 8-10 inches across.

"Amaryllis bulbs can be huge – approaching the size of a grapefruit," Domenghini said "The larger the bulb, the larger the flowers and the more expensive the bulb."

Despite its size, this plant prefers tight quarters, according to Domenghini: "Select a container about one-inch larger in diameter and twice as tall as the bulb with drainage holes in the bottom."

Domenghini explained how to properly pot the amaryllis:

- Hold the bulb so the roots hang down into the pot and add potting mix.
- Firm the mix around the roots carefully so that they are not snapped off.
- Water thoroughly and place the plant in a warm, sunny location.

A day temperature in the 70s and night temperature in 60s is optimal for the amaryllis to bloom, according to Domenghini.

"Once the flower buds begin to show, move the plant to a cooler location and out of direct sunlight so the flowers last longer. Amaryllis can remain in bloom for about a month," she said. "In order to keep the plant from expending energy to form seeds, flowers should be cut off after blooming."

Domenghini added: “Place the plant back in a sunny location until it is warm enough to be placed outside. Sink the pot in the soil in an area that has dappled shade.”

Before the first frost, bring the plant inside and place it in a dark location, withholding all water so the leaves can completely dry. Leaves can be cut off close to the top of the bulb. The amaryllis can usually be left in the same pot for several years, but eventually will need repotting.

Amaryllis can produce 3-4 blooms on a 1-2 foot stem, according to Domenghini, meaning there will be plenty of blooms to admire this holiday season if planted now.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a [weekly Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).

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Sidebar: Question of the Week

My houseplant, croton, is dropping leaves like crazy. Do you have any idea what may be causing this?

Croton needs bright, indirect light, high humidity and warmth in addition to consistent conditions. Sudden changes to the environment can cause leaves to drop. The soil should not be too saturated or too dry. It takes some time to establish the perfect conditions and then to ensure those are maintained to keep the plant happy.

Make sure the plant is placed in an east/west facing window, or use a grow light for supplemental lighting. Keep the plant away from heating/cooling vents. As the temperature outdoor drops, avoid letting the plant touch the cold windows. If the window is older, it may be drafty, which can cause problems as well.

-- Cynthia Domenghini, K-State horticulture expert, Cdom@ksu.edu

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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