

# Popular amaryllis is a holiday star

By Joan Nusbaum, Colorado Master Gardener

One of the fun things to do around the holidays is to grow flowers indoors from bulbs. Amaryllis is popular because of the large blooms and variety of colors to choose from. Once the flowers have faded, it's possible to get subsequent blooms if you follow the steps outlined below. Basically, you can think of this process as growth, feeding and rest.

**Growth:** First, be sure that your bulb is planted in a pot with a drainage hole. If not, replot the bulb using an all-purpose potting mix placing the bulb with the top half above the potting mix. The pot should be no more than 2 inches larger than the bulb. Amaryllis grow best when they are slightly pot-bound. You may need to replot in a larger pot only every three to four years. A sturdy pot will ensure that your flower will not fall over when the tall flower appears! Sometimes there will be more than one flower.

**Feeding:** After the flower has faded, remove the flower head just below the petals to prevent seed formation. Allow the stalk to remain, as it continues to feed the bulb through photosynthesis, which creates energy that is stored then in the bulb. Remove this only after the stalk has shriveled and died.

Continue to provide a weekly feeding of blossom-boosting fertilizer mixed according to the package directions. The bulb will grow bigger and add leaves. Keep feeding until there are seven leaves.

**Rest:** Amaryllis does not require a dormant period in order to flower. You may continue to grow your plant outdoors in the summer. However, if you want to have Amaryllis flowers around the holidays, you must force dormancy about 10 weeks before you wish to see these beautiful flowers indoors.

Once the seventh leaf has appeared, stop watering and allow the bulb to dry out, which promotes dormancy. Place the pot with the bulb in a cool dark place for at least two months. Allow the leaves to die back before cutting them off. When you are ready for another flower, place the potted bulb in a sunny window and resume watering and fertilizing.

You should see a new blossom in seven to nine weeks. If you happen to have an older bulb that has diminished in size, you can rejuvenate the bulb by using this procedure.

