

After Bloom Care for Indoor Bulbs

It is a very common practice to “force” bulbs to bloom indoors during the winter months. The most common are daffodils, hyacinths, tulips, and amaryllis. Many of you may purchase bulbs that are almost ready to bloom from the grocery stores or nursery/florist retail shops, or you may have purchased and forced your own bulbs. But what do you do with the bulbs once they are done blooming?

Amaryllis are perhaps the most showy of the indoor bulbs, and with minimal care, will repeat annually for many years of lovely blossoms. After blooming, amaryllis flowers should be cut off to prevent seed formation. The foliage should then be placed in a sunny, warm location and treated as a houseplant. Once the danger of frost has passed, place the plant outdoors in a location in the garden that receives minimal sunlight. Keep the plant fertilized at regular intervals throughout the summer months to allow the nutrients needed for blooming to build up. Amaryllis

should be brought back indoors before the first danger of frost occurs. Let the foliage dry out by withholding water and storing in a cool, dark location. Once the foliage has dried down completely, the bulb usually will need to be kept dormant for eight weeks before it will re-bloom. If the bulb gets too large for the pot, simply repot into a slightly larger container. If you don't repot, it is good to top dress with fresh potting soil. If plantlets develop alongside the original bulb, you can gently separate these and repot the plantlets. They can also be left to bloom alongside the original bulb, resulting in several amaryllis blooming at one time.

Other bulbs such as daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, and crocus are typically planted outdoors once the indoor blooms have faded. Outdoor planting of forced after they have faded is never a sure thing. Forced bulbs that have bloomed indoors have been through an exhausting process and may or may not re-bloom

in the garden. Once they have finished flowering, plant them out into the garden and provide with water and a slow release bulb food. Wait until the leaves brown and die back before removing the foliage. Daffodils and crocus typically do well naturalizing into the garden after blooming indoors. Tulips do not readily come back even when originally planted in the garden, and thus generally not worth the trouble to re-plant outdoors. These should be enjoyed indoors during bloom and then tossed out or composted. Hyacinths may come back in the garden, usually not as robust in subsequent years.

(Reference for Amaryllis: University of Minnesota Extension Service. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG1116.html>)

**Mary K. Kroening,
Horticulture Specialist
MU Division of Plant Sciences
Kroeningm@missouri.edu**