

The 10 Biggest Mistakes Newcomers Make Growing Amaryllis/Hippeastrum in the Greater Houston Area

By Charles Prasek of the Greater Houston Hippeastrum/Amaryllis Society

1. Over-watering! Containers must allow drainage or bulbs will rot. Use raised beds in the garden. In water culture, base (basal plate) of bulb must be above water level.
2. Not giving bulbs a good start. The first 12 months are critical in developing a good root system and building overall bulb health so that bulbs will have a greater propensity to produce bloom and offsets.
3. Improper fertilizing. Bulbs develop steady growth with light (1/4 strength) feeding MAY through SEPTEMBER. These are particularly heavy feeders so additional applications of seaweed extracts, fish hydrolysates, and compost teas will enhance growth and vigor.
4. Poor soil management. Incorporate leaf mold and compost to develop a healthy, friable soil texture thus increasing microbial activity.
5. Too much summer sun exposure. Ideal: morning sun till noon with shade until 4pm. Summer afternoon sun is harsh and the straps (leaves) will 'bleach-out' interfering with photosynthesis robbing bulbs of stamina.
6. Unnecessarily stressing bulbs. Bulbs require access to moisture and nutrients on a continuous basis - uneven growing conditions results in diminished bloom and a gradual decline (shrinking) of bulbs.



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7. Ignoring bulbs. Pay attention to bulb health. Healthy bulbs are surprisingly resilient and resist pests and disease. However, pest and/or disease problems need to be addressed immediately to limit damage to bulbs.
8. Limiting your selections. Know that in addition to the common there are "Spider," "Miniature" and "Double" types; Dutch, Israeli, South African, South American, Japanese and Australian-sourced bulb varieties and species all of which govern timing of blooming, growth habit, propagation and grooming.
9. Planting bareroot bulbs at the wrong time. Divide bulbs and transplant bareroot only in the months of April and October. Bulbs with an intact root ball and soil may be transplanted anytime of the year.
10. Not realizing how amaryllis bloom. The Amaryllis/Hippeastrum bulb has the capacity to nurture blooms for two consecutive years. Good culture ensures bloomscapes now and initiates "inflorescences" for next year's blooming.

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P.S. The bulbs I received back from Mimi usually went into the ground around April or May. These bulbs forced in pots for winter bloom did have the healthy root systems he describes above. So would bulbs dug now to thin out stands that have gotten too thick.

Keep an eye on our calendar below for meetings and sales by both Houston amaryllis groups.