

Cross Pollination



Taking Care of your “Hippy”

By Cathy Kavassalis

As the blooms of your Amaryllis begin to fade, what do you do? Toss the bulb? Well to be honest, over the years I have tossed or lost many bulbs. But they are relatively easy to care for and can provide years of blooms with a little effort.

Amaryllis or more properly *Hippeastrum* species (Hippies) are beautiful members of the Amaryllis family. Unlike the few true members of the genus *Amaryllis*, Hippies have hollow stems. There are about 60 to 90 species with over 600 cultivars and hybrids. The most commonly sold are large flowered hybrids, though I am very fond of the spider-like species *H. cybister*.

At our November meeting, I purchased the sterile tetraploid, Dutch hybrid, called “Apple Blossom.” (Thanks to David Marshall). The bulb performed beautifully putting up two flower stalks laden with gorgeous blossoms. I put my bulb in a deep but tight pot with just an inch of space around the bulb (others swear by larger pots) and used good quality well-draining potting soil. About a third of the bulb was above the soil, (can be two thirds above soil). While I let the soil partially dry between waterings, I needed to give it a drink at least every

other day when the blossoms opened. As the flowers fade, you will need to cut the flower stalks near the top of the bulb being careful not to injure any emerging leaves.

Once flowering is done, the plant will be in growth mode. Your need to support leaf production so the bulb can begin storing energy for next year’s flowers. Place it in a bright south-facing window. Fertilize monthly and water regularly. Roots will rot if too moist, but it should not dry completely either. In summer, move it outdoors with morning sunlight and some afternoon protection. I plant mine in the garden as I have nice well draining sandy loam, but you can leave them in pots if they have some space to

clean up the bulbs to remove possible pests and let the bulb dry thoroughly. Store in a cool dark place until November. Then its time to start again and hopefully you will get lovely holiday blooms. They can be stored all winter for spring blooms if you choose.

You might like to try propagation. Growers use the ‘twin scales’ method. If you look at your Hippy bulb you will see that like an onion bulb it is made up of layers of fleshy scales. You can carefully remove a portion of two unseparated layers - ‘twin scales’. Slices of twin scales can be placed in a tray of moistened vermiculite. Cover with plastic wrap and leave in the sun or under bright lights. Keep moist.

After about 130 days, bulblets should have developed and can be planted in pots. It takes about three years to get the bulb to bloom size. I have not tried this so I am only reporting what I have read. (Stancato & Mazzafera. 1995. Effects of light on the propagation and growth of bulbs of



Amaryllis or *Hippeastrum* species

grow and you won’t forget to water. You will need to bring them back inside in late September. This year I could not remember where I planted all of mine because their leaves die back and I hadn’t marked their locations – lesson learned.

When collecting your bulbs in the fall,

Hippeastrum hybridum cv. Apple Blossom (*Amaryllidaceae*) Sci. agric. 52(2)331–334). Best of luck with your Hippies.

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Newsletter of the Halton
Master Gardeners

Website:

<http://haltonmastergardeners.wordpress.com>

February TO DO List

- ◇ Order flower and vegetable seeds
- ◇ Bring out bulbs for forcing
- ◇ Do winter pruning (apple, ash, conifers) Maples & Birch will bleed if pruned in spring
- ◇ Build bird houses
- ◇ Sharpen & repair garden tools

Master Gardeners of Halton

Email Help Line: haltonmastergardeners@gmail.com



Halton Master Gardeners Speakers List

Join us for our monthly speakers held at the Royal Botanical Gardens at 7:15 p.m., first Wednesday of the month.

Contact: Patty King at a_p@cogeco.ca Please note a \$5.00 fee covers speakers and refreshments.

Common Problems with indoor house plants in winter

By Donna Parker

1. Over watering!

The biggest cause of plant death in winter is **over watering**. The leaves droop and so we water more and leaves begin to yellow and drop.

Drought also causes leaves to wilt and drop but dryness usually causes shriveling and browning.) Most plants require less water during their dormancy in winter. Never leave plant pots sitting in a saucer of water. You can raise the pot above the water by sitting it on a layer of pebbles. Always allow the soil to dry out between watering. Check the soil with a fingertip to detect presence of moisture before watering.



2. Air is Too Dry

During the winter the air in our homes can be as dry as a desert. When the tips of leaves begin to show brown spots shaped like inverted V's, they are telling you the air is too dry.

Try to keep all house plants away from heat registers and radiators. Here's some things you can try:

- Close the heat vent near plants.
- Mist the foliage regularly with a spray bottle of water.
- Set plants on a tray of pebbles and water.



3. Not Enough Light

Light levels in most homes in the winter are quite low and this can result in pale foliage, weak growth and no flowers. This is particularly true of house plants that have spent the summer outdoors in higher light levels. Shock often results causing plants to droop and leaves to fall off.

It is normal for plants to lose some foliage with a decrease in indoor light levels. When bringing plants inside, prune them back by about 1/4 of the stem lengths. Select house plants that are suited for low light conditions or supplement light artificially.

