

Having Bloom Withdrawal?

Our gloveless hands start shaking and our eyes desperately seek flowery photos in gardening magazines. Why settle for anything other than the real thing? It's easy to force some bulbs to burst forth with dazzling blooms in December and January.

To experience this winter pick-me-up, work with bulbs that do not require a winter chill.

PAPER WHITES (*Narcissus papyraceus*) are probably one of the most popular picks. These dainty flowers magically appear four to six weeks from planting if started before Thanksgiving; only three to four weeks if after Turkey day. Paper whites are also known for their powerful fragrance.

Paper whites are a snap to force!

- Select a container with no drainage holes and is three to four inches deep.
- Sprinkle in stone, gravel or marbles to cover the base about one or two inches deep.
- Set the bulbs on top of the stones so their pointy tips are facing up. Crowd the bulbs together, 'shoulder to shoulder', for a dramatic show.
- Sprinkle in more stones around the bulbs so only their tips peep out.
- Pour water into the container so that the water line is at the bulbs' base. Don't cover them with water or the little gems may rot.
- Place the container in a spot where the room temperature is around 65 degrees.

Don't worry about the lighting, at this point it doesn't matter. Every day or two, check the container to see if more water is needed. Once the bulbs start to sprout, move the container to a brightly lit area and get ready to enjoy your blooms!

AMARYLLIS is another popular bulb for holiday forcing.

Huge, bold trumpets aptly describe Amaryllis flowers. They are available in a variety of colors including red, white, pinks and bi-colors.

Unlike Paper whites, these are planted in potting soil, with 1/3 of the bulb left above 'ground'. Follow package directions for complete details. The majestic blooms of these beauties take longer to appear; between six and ten weeks from planting.

Select a container with drainage holes. It should be container that allows no more than 2" from the bulb to the side of the container. Amaryllis likes to feel very cozy.

- Use a well-draining potting mix
- Plant the bulb so the top third is above the soil. This includes the narrower neck section.
- Water thoroughly making sure none goes on the neck itself.
- No regular watering is needed before the bulb begins to sprout. If the soil seems completely dried out, you may give it some water, but no more than once a week. Overwatering at this stage can very easily rot the bulb!
- Keep your planted bulb at room temperature.
- Keep in bright, indirect light.

After Paper whites and Amaryllis wow beholders, toss them. Not to sound disrespectful, but it can be difficult to get them to rebloom the following year. Better to add them to the compost pile and let them benefit soil life.

In November and December, Faddegon's always stocks plenty of holiday bulbs, containers and materials for forcing or just pick up one of our kits! The amaryllis colors are always stunning!