

The Green Scene

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Year and Garden: Forcing Amaryllis Bulbs Indoors for Holiday Use

By Richard Jauron, Greg Wallace

AMES, Iowa—It's hard to believe, but the holiday season is almost here. One of the best parts of the season is enjoying colorful seasonal holiday plants like amaryllis. What is the best way to force amaryllis indoors? When do they need to be prepared with the holidays in mind?

What type of amaryllis are available for forcing indoors?

Amaryllis are available in a wide range of colors. Flower colors include red, pink, orange, salmon, white, and bicolor. Single-flowering, double flowering, and miniature amaryllis cultivars are available.

Excellent single-blooming cultivars include 'Apple Blossom' (white with pink feathering), 'Blushing Bride' (rose-pink), 'Christmas Gift' (white with green throat), 'Marry Christmas' (bright red), 'Minerva' (red with white star), 'Naranja' (red-orange), 'Picotee' (white with red-rimmed petals), 'Orange Sovereign' (orange), 'Red Lion' (crimson red), and 'Wedding Dance' (pure white with pale green throat).

Double-flowering cultivars include 'Aphrodite' (white with pinkish re feathering), 'Blossom Peacock' (rose-red with white throat and midrib), 'Dancing Queen' (red and white striped), 'Inferno' (dark red), and 'White Nymph' (white).

Miniature cultivars are only slightly shorter than their single- and double-flowering counterparts. However their flowers are about half the width of the large flowering types. Excellent miniature cultivars include 'Baby Star' (crimson red with white center star), 'Fairytale' (white with raspberry red stripes), 'Green Goddess' (white with green center), and 'Neon' (fuchsia pink with white throat).

Learn more about How to pot up an amaryllis bulb at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/yard-and-garden-forcing-amaryllis-bulbs-indoors-holiday-use>

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What is Chinese Chestnut?

By Patrick O'Malley

Chinese chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*) is a deciduous tree that produces edible nuts in September and October. This is a different species from the American chestnut that was decimated last century by a fungal canker blight that essentially eliminated it from the eastern U.S. forests. In Iowa, Chinese chestnuts are grown more frequently in the southern half of the state. The first commercial plantings were planted in SE Iowa in the early 1990's. Currently about 100,000 pounds of nuts are produced in Iowa.

At least two different Chinese chestnut trees are needed to ensure adequate pollination. Chestnut trees should be planted in soil with good drainage. Heavy clay soils should be avoided. Spacing should be about 30 feet between trees and rows. A 30 x 30 spacing would allow for 48 trees/acre while 28 x 30 would be 51 trees/acre. Because of the wide spacing, other crops including vegetables or small fruits could be planted between the trees for at least the first decade. Trees can start bearing the first nuts in 3-4 years. At ten years they should be producing between 10-15 pounds of nuts per tree. Eventually after several decades the trees can reach a height of 40-60' and spread 30' and potentially produce 50lbs of nuts. Chinese chestnuts would not be the ideal shade tree for a play yard. The reason being that the nuts (usually 3) are enclosed in a very spiny burr. The nuts fall to the ground when the burrs open up on the tree. Eventually the burrs fall off and can be a bit of a nuisance.

There are some questions on hardiness of Chinese chestnuts in Iowa. Generally they are thought to be hardy at least throughout the USDA growing zone 5 (winter low temperatures of -10 to -20 F). In 1996 some trees in SE Iowa withstand -30 F with little to no damage. In the 20 plus years since they have fared well in SE Iowa. However, this past year brings some question into the resiliency of these trees. Many of the trees in SE Iowa leafed out in late 2019 and a few even died. This resulted in a crop of nuts that was about 20% of normal. Factors that may have attributed to this were wet to saturated soils from August 2018 through early June 2019, a sharp change from a warm October 2018 to a cold November 2018 (trees may not have hardened off), temperatures of -28 F in late January of 2019 and also -10 in early March 2019.

So, the trees may not be perfect and they do have the fore mentioned spiny burrs, but they may be well worth a try.

Where can I get more information on Chinese chestnuts?

The center of Agroforestry at the University of Missouri. Has a wealth of information on chestnuts <http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/pubs/chestnutpubs.php>



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