

Amaryllis belladonna - Care Guide

Caring For Amaryllis Belladonna – Belladonna Lily

When we talk about autumn flowering bulbs to cheer up the drabness of that depressing season we have talked about nerine and crinum. Amaryllis belladonna are the third ingredient which every garden should have.

Amaryllis belladonna is a genus of one species of deciduous autumn flowering bulbous perennials. The plants, which are so popular at Christmas as presents, are known as 'amaryllis' but these are much hybridised and bred tender house or greenhouse plants of many colours which are related but far removed from the real thing.

Belladonnas are plants from the Western Cape of South Africa which is, of course, why they flower here in the autumn. They will happily survive temperatures of minus 5°C or more with us and are actually quite common plants all along the English Channel coast and much further inland perhaps where their survival is helped by a heavy autumn mulch over the bulbs and around the leaves.

The bulbs need to be planted only just below the surface of the soil or compost when greenhouse grown or in the garden. They should be planted when dormant in spring or late summer.

Belladonnas suddenly produce stout purple-green stems of up to 2ft in height with umbels of six or more funnel shaped pink flowers in autumn. The flowers are scented. After flowering fleshy green leaves appear which die down by the spring.

They like fertile well drained soil in full sun so that the bulbs flower better because they have had a good baking in the sun. In the greenhouse plant in a loam based potting compost with leaf mould and sand for good drainage. Keep dry when dormant.

Like all bulbs amaryllis produce offsets and form a clump of bulbs which can eventually be lifted and divided when dormant. If your plant sets seeds after flowering, as it well may, these can be sown in a frost free greenhouse as soon as they are ripe.



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Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ

Telephone: +44 (0) 1209 860316 Fax: +44 (0) 1209 860011 Email: info@burncoose.co.uk

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