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Winter-flowering house plants

BY JANET HILL

Littleton Garden Club

When the riot of flowering perennials is well and truly over, winter-flowering house plants can provide cheerful color indoors. And with care, many will bloom year after year.

The most spectacular of these is the Amaryllis. This can be bought already potted and makes a great Christmas gift. Look in a local box store, or in the catalog of a prestigious nursery, such as the White Flower Farm. There are so many varieties with a wide range of color, red, white, pink and bicolor, doubles or singles, in pots, woven baskets or glassware.

"Cybister Amaryllis" is a new variety that looks like a tropical bird.

With proper care, an Amaryllis will bloom year after year & will produce baby bulbs that you can give to your friends. After blooming, the flower stalk will shrivel, but the large leaves will soak up sunlight for the rest of the summer. Put your plant outside in a sunny spot as soon as the danger of frost is past. Feed it. In early fall, allow it to



go dormant by putting it in a cool, dark spot for 2 to 4 months, depending on when you would like it to bloom. Find a sunny window and start watering it. It will begin to grow a flower bud, and later leaves. Mine never bloom at Christmas, but are glorious in early March.

The Poinsettia is another colorful winter bloomer and is associated with the holidays when it can be found in many stores. It is possible to keep a Poinsettia from year to year, but it may not have as much color as ones grown in greenhouses. It is actually a small shrub and the star-shaped flowers are in fact bracts or leaves. After Christmas, cut back faded blooms and keep it in as much light as you can, somewhere it will not be

exposed to drafts. Water when dry and mist occasionally. It will grow new leaves and bush out again. In the spring, re-pot it, since it may have come in a flimsy plastic container. The new pot should be a couple of inches wider than the original container.

The Cyclamen, a member of the Primula family, is a beautiful perennial that has become popular recently. It is a native of Europe where it can be found as a wild flower. The leaves are heart-shaped and patterned. It should be watered from the base and able to draw up the water it needs. It thrives in a cool spot and may appreciate an east facing window.

Another favorite is the Christmas Cactus. Mine blooms in November, so I call it a Thanksgiving Cactus. It is native to Mexico. Most are cultivars and the blooms can be red, orange, pink or white. They flourish in bright but indirect light. Water when the top layer of soil is dry. Reducing the frequency of watering in the fall and winter and a daytime temperature of 70 degrees and cooler at

night encourages bloom. Prune after the blooming period and re-pot every few years.

[Whoops! Mine are overdue.]

If you have geraniums outside in the summer, bring them in before the first frost and they will reward you with winter blooms. Give them as much light as you can.

This article describes some of the most popular and more easily available winter-blooming houseplants. Others worthy of mention are the Moth Orchid, Clivia, the Crown of Thorns, Narcissus and African Violets.

There are many ways to brighten your home during the winter months, and you can admire your blooms while you wait for warmer weather to return.

Footnote. Researchers tell us that viewing nature indoors can lower your heart rate and reduce blood pressure and anxiety.

For more information on the Littleton Garden Club visit the website: <https://www.littletonnhgardenclub.org/>. There is a link to our Facebook page there.