

Amaryllis vs Hippeastrum: What is the Difference?

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Hippeastrum and *Amaryllis* are both flowering bulbs grown outdoors in warmer climates. Both plants produce stunning umbelliform flowers and are commonly confused. This article looks at the differences between *Amaryllis* and *Hippeastrum*.

Amaryllis



Amaryllis is a flowering bulb native to South Africa made up of two species, *A. belladonna* and *A. paradisicola*. Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, the father of modern taxonomy, named the species *Amaryllis* in 1753. He named the South African plant *Amaryllis belladonna*, based on the Greek word “amarysso,” which means “to sparkle,” in reference to the plant’s beautiful flowers.

Flowers on a single leafless stem in autumn, hence the name ‘*naked lady*’. At the top of each stem is a cluster of six or more trumpet-shaped flowers most commonly in pink. A month or so later, the strappy foliage appears, lasting through winter before dying back.

Family	<i>Amaryllidaceae</i>
Botanical name	<i>Amaryllis belladonna</i> , <i>Amaryllis paradisicola</i>
Common names	Belladonna lily, Amaryllis, Cape belladonna, Naked lady, Jersey lily, March lily, True amaryllis
Plant type	Herbaceous perennial
Flower colour	Pink, red and white
Native to	South Africa
Position	Full sun, partial sun

Hippeastrum



Hippeastrum is a genus made up of 90 species and 600 hybrids and cultivars of flowering bulbs native to the Caribbean, Mexico and South America. This showy plant is commonly sold as an indoor flowering plant during the Christmas period.

Hippeastrum was previously known as *Amaryllis*, however, in 1987, the 14th International Botanical Congress ruled that the name *Amaryllis* belonged to the South African genus while the South American natives were transferred to *Hippeastrum*. Most commercial *Hippeastrum* hybrids are derived from just six species.

Family	<i>Amaryllidaceae</i>
Botanical name	<i>Hippeastrum spp.</i>
Common names	Hippeastrum, Amaryllis, Mexican lily, St. Joseph's lily
Plant type	Herbaceous perennial
Flower colour	Red, salmon, pink, apricot, red and white
Native to	Caribbean, Mexico and South America
Position	Full sun to part shade

What is the difference between Amaryllis and Hippeastrum?

	Amaryllis	Hippeastrum
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NATIVE TO	South Africa.	Originates from Central and South America
SPECIES	One species (<i>Amaryllis belladonna</i>).	Contains multiple species under the genus <i>Hippeastrum</i> .
NAME	Known as Belladonna Lily.	Known as hippeastrum, also commonly called <i>Amaryllis</i> (confusingly).
STEMS	Produces one flower long leafless stem when flowering, pink flowers have a purple stem, white flowers have a green stem. Stems are thinner.	Produces multiple flower short stems. Stems are thicker.
FLOWERS	Flowers have six equal petals that face upward.	Flowers have six petals, often with a trumpet-like shape that face outward or slightly downward.
FLOWER COLOUR	Pink or white.	Red, pink, white, and orange.
BLOOMS	Blooms in late summer or early autumn.	Blooms in winter or spring.
LEAVES	Narrow and strap-like with a prominent midrib.	Wider and more sword-like with a less prominent midrib.
PROPAGATION	Propagates through seeds and offsets.	Propagates through offsets and, occasionally, seeds.
DORMANCY	Requires a dry dormancy period before flowering.	Can flower without a specific dormancy period.
FRAGRANCE	Sweet, honeysuckle.	No scent.
USES	<i>Amaryllis</i> typically grow outside in warmer climates and is not generally grown as an indoor plant.	<i>Hippeastrum</i> is widely sold as indoor flowering bulbs during the Northern Hemisphere Christmas period. Can also grow outdoors in warmer climates.
BULBS	<i>Amaryllis</i> bulbs are planted entirely beneath the soil.	The neck of the <i>Hippeastrum</i> bulb remains above ground.
SEED SHAPE	Round.	Oblong or three-lobed.

NATURAL GROWTH	Grows in clusters in the wild.	Grows individually or in small groups in the wild.
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