

Hints for Growing Hyacinths for Showing

When choosing bulbs look for those that do not feel soft in anyway, have no signs of bruising or mould. Store them in a cool, preferably dark place until planting. It is best not to choose 'prepared bulbs', i.e. those that have not been kept in refrigerated conditions in order to encourage them to flower for Christmas.

The period between planting the bulbs and putting them on the show bench is approximately 16 weeks although this can vary with varieties, weather conditions and room temperature.

Planting:

Use lightly damp bulb fibre, multi-purpose compost or even garden soil (without stones or weeds!) in either plastic or terracotta pots in sizes according to the show schedule. Glass hyacinth vases are not normally used for showing unless stated in the show schedule .

Plant the correct number of bulbs (1 or 3) in pot with the point upwards so that it is just showing through the compost. Do not allow bulbs to touch each other as this can cause rotting.

Hyacinths require a cool, dark period of not less than 8 weeks in order to form a good root structure before flowering. To achieve this they should be kept in a very cool cupboard, shed, garage or left in a sheltered place outside. They can also be buried in their pots in the garden - remember to mark the place. It is helpful to place a layer of mulch or leaf mould over the surface (unless burying in the garden) to keep out light and keep moisture in but do NOT cover with plastic. Check (unburied) bulbs a couple of times to ensure they have not dried out.

After their period of darkness, check they are beginning to shoot, remove any mulch and then gradually bring into the light but still keep cool. They can remain outside as frost/snow will not harm them although they should not be allowed to freeze in their pots if conditions persist.

In approximately ten days gradually introduce a small amount of warmth by putting them in a COLD greenhouse or bringing them into an UNHEATED room. If they are allowed too much heat, they will grow too quickly, become excessively tall and flop over when they flower.

Keep bulbs well watered. There is no need to apply feed as this is contained in the bulb.

When the flower begins to show colour, they can be moved into a warmer (but not hot) room. Monitor their progress in line with the date of the show and if they are not flowering quickly enough, give them additional heat. If they are flowering too quickly, move them to a cool or cold place, even put them back outside if necessary. It is much easier to hasten the rate of flowering than it is to hold back a flower so that it does not 'go over' before the show.

For showing, every flower on the flowerhead should be open, including the topmost bud. There should be only one flowerhead per bulb, smaller additional flowerheads should be removed as early as possible in the growing process.

GOOD LUCK!

Maggi Stowers

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