

Haemanthus - Bulbs

It is an evergreen bulbous perennial geophyte, prized horticulturally for its unusual appearance and extreme tolerance of neglect

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Description Haemanthus and Scadoxus have striking flower heads that can resemble a shaving brush and vary in colour from red through pink to white. These South African bulbs thrive on a sunny windowsill and are trouble free to grow.

Haemanthus albiflos is a species of flowering plant in the family Amaryllidaceae, native to South Africa. It is sometimes given the English name paintbrush, not to be confused with Castilleja species which also have this name. It is an evergreen bulbous perennial geophyte, prized horticulturally for its unusual appearance and extreme tolerance of neglect.

The upper half of the bulb is usually exposed and bright green. Since it produces a pair of leaves once a year and is evergreen, the plant may have up to three pairs of leaves. The leaves are up to 40 cm (16 in) long, and may have a covering of short, soft hairs, and occasionally yellow spots on the upper surface.

Common name Blood lily, shaving brush plant, Cape tulip

Botanical name Haemanthus and Scadoxus

Group Houseplant

Flowering time Summer to autumn

Planting time Re-pot occasionally in spring or early summer.

Common name: Blood lily, shaving brush plant, Cape tulip

Color: Haemanthus flowers appear in shades of red to pink or rarely white.

Bloom time: Summer to autumn

Height: 20-30 cm (8"-1 ft)

Difficulty level: Easy

Planting & Care

Haemanthus coccineus usually grows in winter and spring, and goes dormant for the summer. It makes a large, flattened bulb from which 2 fleshy leaves appear (occasionally 3). For the largest possible leaves, grow the plant in half shade. The bare flower stalk emerges just before the leaves in late summer, similar to Amaryllis belladonna.

The flower stem grows 6 to 15 inches tall, and usually has reddish, leopard-spot markings along the lower half. The scarlet-red bracts open to reveal dozens of golden anthers. Eventually the bulb multiplies into an impressive colony of plants. But even if you only grow a single plant in a

pot, it is a real eye-opener!

Sunlight: Bright light but filter the light when the buds appear to prolong flowering (i.e. move away from the window a little)

Soil: It grows well in a pot in a fast-draining soil mix, such as half potting soil and half perlite, pumice, or coarse sand.

Water: Keep evergreen species moist when dormant but, with deciduous species like *H. coccineus*, withhold water when the leaves begin to yellow and resume watering when the new leaves appear

Temperature: Plants can be grown in a cool conservatory or greenhouse with minimum temperature of 10°C (50°F)

Fertilizer: Apply a dilute, balanced liquid houseplant fertiliser each month during the growing season (April until September).

Care:

- The cultivation of *Haemanthus* and *Scadoxus* is similar and relatively straightforward.
- There is confusion over names of these plants as *Scadoxus* was originally called *Haemanthus* and many are still sold under this name.
- These plants can be easily grown by following these practical steps.
- Although any good well-drained potting medium should be satisfactory, a loam-based compost such as John Innes No 2 with additional peat substitute such as coir or leaf mould and grit each about 20 percent by volume is ideal Place in bright light but filter the light when the buds appear to prolong flowering (i.
 - e. move away from the window a little) Water freely when in growth and apply a dilute, balanced liquid houseplant fertiliser each month during the growing season (April until September) Keep evergreen species moist when dormant but, with deciduous species like *H. coccineus*, withhold water when the leaves begin to yellow and resume watering when the new leaves appear Plants can be grown in a cool conservatory or greenhouse with minimum temperature of 10°C (50°F) Re-pot as growth begins, but they flower best when pot bound.
- The compost in containers tends to lose its structure over time so container maintenance should be carried out annually.
- Propagation As with other bulbous plants, *haemanthus* can be propagated from offsets as well as from seed.
- *Haemanthus* readily produce offsets that can be detached, but this discourages flowering which is always better on congested plants.
- The offsets can then be potted up using the same growing media as for the parent plant.
- Plants may take three-to-four years to flower with *H. albiflos*.
- The fleshy seeds should be sown soon after ripening as they are only viable for a short period Sow into a deep seed tray filled with well-drained, sandy compost Press seeds lightly into the surface of the compost so the top of the seed is showing Maintain at 16-18°C (61-64°F) Water well initially and then only when the leaves appear.
- Take care not to over water and make the soil soggy Young plants can be left in the seed trays for several years before potting up With *H. coccineus*, stop watering when the leaves begin to yellow, and only resume once the leaves reappear

Use

Reference:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=715> <http://www.strangewonderfulthings.com/254.htm>

Reviews

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Dilip Dhariwal