

Activity: Plant Care **Goal:** Cognitive/Intellectual **Populations:** All but dementia, children

TH Activity Plan – Waxing Amaryllis Bulbs

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Photo by Connecticut Public Journal & Get Busy Gardening.com



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will dip amaryllis bulbs into wax for a protective coating & a method to eliminate watering.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Develop flexible thinking skills for plant care

Physical: Strengthen hand-eye coordination dipping bulbs in wax; strengthen hand grip using fingers or tongs

Psychological/Emotional: Expand creative skills by using plants in a different way

Sensory: Strengthen sensory motor skills using hands & eyes for task

Social: Engage with others taking turns with activity materials; engage with others gifting bulbs

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:**
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing activity of waxing amaryllis bulbs. This decorative activity also eliminates the need to water the bulbs. Prepare a blooming sample ahead of session. Review safety points prior to any activity occurring.
3. Use healthy bulbs with some green on stalks. Remove any soil from bulbs. Soak for 6-8 hours before waxing, soaking the roots but avoiding getting the neck (green part) of the bulb wet. Let dry for 2 hours. Bulbs will be damp but not so damp that wax will not adhere.
4. Cut bottom of bulb off (roots too), making a flat cut so that bulb will sit flat on any surface. This may be done by facilitator or where appropriate, the participants.
5. Melt paraffin wax (available in baking section) in a double boiler or wax melter. Note that it is flammable. Set waxed bulbs on wax paper to dry & harden being careful with hot wax as they are removed & placed on paper.
6. Spray-paint waxed part of bulbs. Let dry. Decorate with glitter.

Materials

Amaryllis bulbs

Pot for soaking, double boiler or wax melter

Scissors, knife, paraffin or bees wax, tongs, spray paint, glitter, glue

Fabric gloves, wipes

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity uses sharp knives, hot wax and heating elements, making it inappropriate for some populations including children, some people living with dementia or intellectual disabilities, mental health challenges where self-harm may occur, or incarcerated individuals. As a wellness activity it offers seasonal interest, horticultural exploration and a way to observe and participate in plant growth that occurs in a short period of time during winter months.

Therapeutic goals with a cognitive domain focus can develop or strengthen flexible thinking skills. Using a TH activity where plant care takes an unusual form of waxing bulbs can provide an opportunity to think outside the

box, and learn about plant growth (stored carbohydrates, cycle of bloom) while observing the plant's burst of growth and blooming period. Group discussion about these horticulture features can be adapted to all age groups and cognitive abilities. Having a sample waxed amaryllis in bloom demonstrates the viability of such horticulture methods.

Physical domain goals can be integrated with sensory goals where hand-eye coordination, and sensory motor skills are the focus of the session. These might be applicable to populations recovering from injury, rehabilitating, and youth or others with sensory motor skills related to developmental delays. Aging populations may also benefit from physical focus of therapeutic goals where standing to perform the task, using hand strength/endurance and coordinating movements are used. Where necessary, hand on hand cutting of bulb's bottoms may be an accommodation.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.

It is not appropriate for individuals or populations where safety related to using sharp knives, hot wax, hot surfaces, or spray paint (inappropriate inhalation) may be a concern. Bulbs should be kept away from children and pets; bulbs are toxic if consumed.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: [Amaryllis](#) are holiday plants readily available at most stores. Amaryllis bulbs, with or without wax, bloom using their stored carbohydrates. Most waxed amaryllis will have lovely blooms that will last for about 3 weeks. Some may develop mold which will reduce viability. Tips for waxing include: using a wax melter, use of tongs (possibly secured with rubber band to avoid releasing and splashing of bulb into hot wax), and safety review for using hot items (wax, wax on bulbs, wax melter, tools with wax on them). Working in small groups, and one at a time, taking time to move slowly and carefully, can be an important safety practice. Fabric gloves (not latex) may also prevent touching hot wax accidentally.

Care of bulbs to maximize their bloom includes keeping them at 70 degrees (room temperature), avoiding direct light, no watering, rotating the bulb every couple of days, and removing faded stalks once blooming has occurred allowing other stalks to thrive. Waxed amaryllis, homemade or store-bought, are considered single use specimens, however according to the [University of Delaware, these can rebloom](#) if the wax is removed, and bulbs placed on wet paper towel for roots to develop, these appearing in 4-6 weeks.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Andrychowicz, A. (2024). [How to grow waxed amaryllis bulbs](#). *Get Busy Gardening.com*.

Flower Fanatic. (2022). Waxed amaryllis bulbs: Easy how to make wax coated amaryllis bulbs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ee3L16oSCTY>

Steil, A. (2024). [How do I care for a waxed amaryllis bulb?](#) Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Steil, A. (2022). [All about amaryllis](#). Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.



Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2024.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.