

Cybister Amaryllis



A whole new look for an easy flowering crop.

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I was lucky enough to get a chance to go to Holland this year, which was a first for me. I accompanied 28 students through nurseries and the Aalsmeer Flower auction. Dutch floriculture is something everyone in our industry needs to experience firsthand. Whether you are a student or a grower, I don't think

you will ever have the same outlook on our industry after seeing Dutch production. We forget how much longer Europe has been working in horticulture and what incredible diversity their market offers. It is a humbling experience to see how little of world crop diversity we see on the U.S. market — humbling and it makes my palms sweat... The variety and new cultivar quality I saw was amazing; left me asking the question "Why isn't this stuff available in the U.S.?"

While there were more than 60 plants on the local market that I had never seen before (hydrangea, streptocarpus, tropical bulbs, cordylines), the main thing I came away with was a love of the cybister amaryllis (*Amaryllis cybister*) first described in 1938. Trust me, the Dutch grow wonderful amaryllis; even the traditional types were phenomenal, but the cybister hybrids are something else entirely. Let's forget for a moment that in Florida, where I live, amaryllis is a hardy perennial with a huge landscape niche. All the tropical bulbs are under-marketed, and we'll be talking more about others in upcoming months.

In spring bulb displays across the United States you'll likely find amaryllis, lycoris, nerine and perhaps sprekelia. So when we discuss the cybister amaryllis hybrids imagine a lycoris with blooms 6 inches across on a 24-inch-tall stem. That is what separates the

cybister hybrids from the common amaryllis. Each flower petal is approximately 1/4-inch wide, and the effect is spectacular. Why should you be selling these bulbs? Because they should sell for almost twice what you get for a standard amaryllis! This is a huge step ▶



'Papilio'

Figure 1. Available cybister and novelty groups.

Cybister hybrids	Description	Supplier
'Emerald'	White to pale pink with green center	Van Engelen Stuifbergen Bloembollen VWS
'La Paz'	Pink/red with white lower	Van Engelen Stuifbergen Bloembollen VWS
'Ruby Meyer'	Deep red with green center	Van Engelen Stuifbergen Bloembollen VWS
'Lima'	Red and green bicolor	VWS
'Chico'	Red and green bicolor, unique form	Stuifbergen Bloembollen
'Quito'	Red/pink	Ludwig & Co.
'Rosario'	Bright pink/rose	Ludwig & Co.
'Tango'	Red to pale red	Unknown
Novelty amaryllis	Description	Supplier
'Amputo'	White trumpet type	Van Engelen Stuifbergen Bloembollen
'Pink Floyd'	Pink/rose shaded trumpet type	Van Engelen Stuifbergen Bloembollen
'Misty'	Pink with pale edged petals	Stuifbergen Bloembollen
'Melusine'	Deep rose fading to pink, green center	Stuifbergen Bloembollen
'Papilio'	White and purple striped, unique markings	VWS Van Bourgondien
'Estella'	Bright pink	Ludwig & Co.

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'Ruby Meyer'

Culture Quickie: Cybister Amaryllis

Media. Well-drained media with a coarse texture and pH of 6.0-6.5. Media with a high organic content (peat moss, etc.) tends to hold water and nutrients longer. Some local-market growers add sand to provide weight in the container.

Planting. As with traditional amaryllis, avoid deep planting. The tip of the bulb should be ½-1 inch above the soil surface. Planting time is generally from September to January. One florist-size bulb per 6-inch pot.

Fertilization. No fertilization is required until the root system has actively begun growing. The flower spike is pre-formed from previous growth, so in most cases low fertility (75-150 ppm) is all that is required. Avoid applying excess nitrogen, as it promotes vegetative growth and reduces flowering. Cybister is reported to be an evergreen form of amaryllis, so the leaves may persist throughout the year once established.

Watering. For best growth, keep media slightly moist; avoid over watering, as this is the major cause of production problems, especially when done immediately after bulbs are planted and before the root system is actively growing. Thoroughly wet all media at planting, and then apply water only if media dries before growth begins. Avoid getting water into the "nose" of the bulbs where it can promote rot.

Temperature. Amaryllis are tropical bulbs and as such prefer warm day temperatures of 70-75° F. Make sure to have plenty of air circulation around bulbs as they begin to develop. After flowering, cooler temperatures (60-65° F) will extend the length of bloom.

Bulb storage. Store in moist peat at 55-73° F or dry at 68-77° F.

Light. Amaryllis are sun-loving plants, so bright light will give the shortest stems and best quality flower development; however, in higher altitude production some shading may be best.

Propagation. By seed, division of offsets or tissue culture. Because it is so easy to pollinate and germinate amaryllis seed, this crop is a great example for beginning plant breeders; the disadvantage of growing amaryllis from seed is the variation of color, shape and time of flowering. Cybister types may or may not be fertile.

Timing. Depending on production temperatures, bulbs flower 4-8 weeks after growth is initiated. If propagated by division of offset, cottage or tissue culture plants will flower after two years and by seeds after three or more years.

Flowering. Flower size is closely related to bulb size, with larger bulbs producing larger or more bloom spikes. Studies have shown that long-day photoperiods facilitate flowering, but most amaryllis will bloom if forced under short days as well.

Marketing season. November to May. Amaryllis of all types have an extended season from winter holidays to early summer. This is a great crop to add to your Christmas sales program; you'll usually get more for the bulbs during the holidays than you will in spring when so many other plants are competing for consumer attention.

PGRs. Paclobutrazol has been used to control flower stalk and leaf elongation, roughly 23.66 mg a.i. drench per 6-inch pot, depending on grower location and production temperatures.



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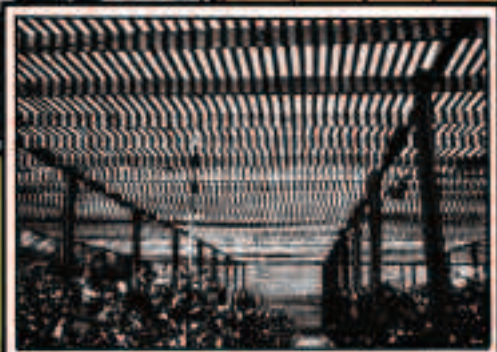
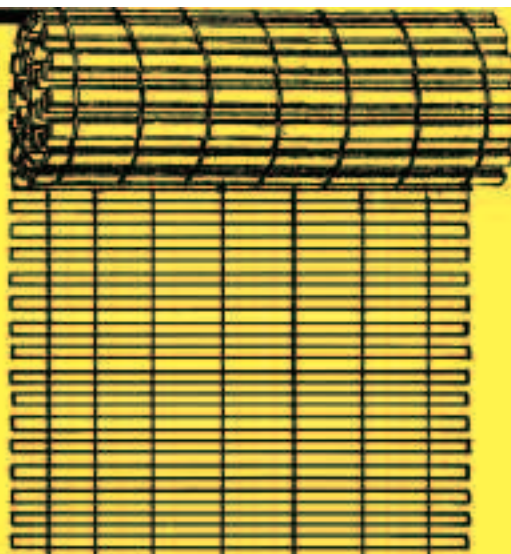
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Left: 'Pink Floyd'. Right: Unknown.

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forward in novelty flowering bulbs, and we already know how to grow them; their production is identical to traditional amaryllis.

Though sold as cybister amaryllis, it is really more than a trade name; this group of plants is a separate species (*Hippeastrum cybister*), and like most of this group of tropical bulbs, it originates in South America. However, many of the

early crosses were made by the late Fred Meyer, a San Diego, Calif., plant breeder. Expect more in the way of new releases as more people experiment with crosses using *H. cybister*.

Another thing to note with the cybister group is that they are predominantly evergreen, so you should not expect them to lose their leaves as traditional amaryllis do; in fact, retention of leaves is important for setting up next season's flowers. Leaves, like the petals, are thinner than traditional amaryllis as well.

What's available out there right now? Currently, we have about five readily available hybrids (See Figure 1, page 22). I think two of these are really outstanding; 'Ruby Meyer' has the most intense coloring and makes a great Christmas alternative crop with a true red and green-centered flower. 'Chico' is simply a work of art with curving bracts and an alien architecture that really stands out from the others in the group. GPN

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