

Growing Hyacinths in Glasses

Growing hyacinths in glasses is one of the most popular ways of getting bulbs to flower earlier than their natural time (bulb forcing). It lets you bring the delightful perfume of hyacinth flowers into your house in mid winter, and it's great fun and educational for kids as they can watch the growth of the bulb from roots to flowering.

Hyacinth glasses today are available in attractive new shapes, and in a variety of colours. They can also be used as stylish flower vases when not in use with bulbs.

All you need to start forcing bulbs is a good-sized hyacinth bulb, a hyacinth glass and water.

1. Place the bulb so it sits on the narrowed neck of the hyacinth glass, as shown. Fill the glass with water to just below the bulb and add a piece of charcoal to help prevent algae growth. Adding a quarter teaspoon of cut flower food as supplied with floral arrangements will help to feed the bulb as it grows, but it is not essential as the bulb itself is a full storehouse of food.

Put the glass with the bulb into a cool dark place for two months – the fridge is ideal. Check it weekly to make sure the water level remains just under the base of the bulb so root growth is encouraged.



2. After eight to ten weeks, bring the glass out into a dimly lit place. By now the bulb has had a long enough cold period to start the flowering process. The roots should have developed down into the water and the shoot may be up to 4 cm long already. The leaves can also be up to 4 cm long at this stage. If the roots have not developed well then a few weeks longer in storage will be necessary, as roots must be present before sustained top growth begins.

3. Over a period of three weeks, slowly bring the vase into stronger light and a warmer position, but no more than 18 degrees. Too much warmth at this stage can result in a rush into flowering before the stem has developed to a good length, or very weak stems which will topple over.

4. Four to six weeks after bringing the glass out of cool, dark storage your flower will be in full bloom. Keep it in a well lit position now, but out of full sun which will cause the flower to age quickly.

After flowering, the bulb can be carefully transplanted into soil in the garden. It has given up most of its energy by flowering early, and will need to recover in the garden for two seasons before it will be strong enough to force again.