

## Tale from the Garden!

Don't let dark winter days get you down – brighten your life with a colourful bowl of scented hyacinths. There is really nothing more cheering in the New Year than the fragrance & colour of this winter favourite.

Potted up as dormant bulbs in autumn, kept cool & dark for a couple of months in a shed or garage, the spikes will push up among the starburst of shin green leaves to produce their drumsticks of fragrant flowers in shades of pink, blue, creamy yellow & white. They are truly nature's room scenter.

But sometimes things don't go according to plan & hyacinths don't perform as they should. For a start, if you bring them in to a warm room too early they'll often start to open their flowers while they're still nestling close to the bulb. Wait until you can see the flower spike has pushed up clear of the 'neck' of the bulb. Look closely & you'll notice a narrower 'waist' just below the flower spike, showing it is fully developed. Only then should you bring it indoors. Even so, you will have more lasting pleasure if you keep the hyacinths cool. Hot, dry rooms encourage them to become tall & gangly, as will a position too far from the light. A cool windowsill is essential, then the flowers won't extend or lean nearly so much as they would on a table in the middle of a warm room.



Apollo, God of the Sun, and Zephyrus, God of the West Wind, both fought for the love of a young Spartan prince named Hyacinth (HYAKINTHOS in Greek). He was known to be one of the most beautiful men alive so they were vicious in their fight - however Hyacinth chose Apollo. One day while Apollo and Hyacinth were playing a game of discus, Zephyrus watched in jealousy. In a rage, when Apollo threw the next discus, Zephyr blew a gust of wind that changed the direction of the discus and it struck Hyacinth on the head, killing him instantly. Apollo, broken-hearted, notices that a flower springs up from the blood that was spilled and names the flower hyacinth in honour of the boy. That's why as well as being a symbol of the Spring Equinox, the hyacinth is also known as 'the sorrow flower,' and 'flower of the rain.'

### SYMBOLISM

Because the hyacinth is the flower of the sun god Apollo it has become a symbol of peace, commitment and beauty, but also of power and pride. The hyacinth is often found in Christian churches as a symbol of happiness and love.

### ORIGIN

The hyacinth came around 1560 from Turkey, Syria and the Lebanon to Europe, but it was a couple of centuries before everyone could enjoy them. Around the 17th and 18th centuries hyacinths were so exclusive that only a couple of rich plant lovers had them in their greenhouses. That is thankfully a lot different nowadays.

I love to offer the hyacinth flower as presents, to welcome spring & to symbolize a fresh start. I offer them as a silent prayer of hope. **The Hyacinth Flower's Message Is:** Be happy and make time to play, but do not act rashly, as this can lead to deep regrets. At this time, with the Covid virus on a devastating rampage across the country, we have to be especially careful, act responsibly & be considerate for the safety & wellbeing of those around us. One of my favourite sayings is this: "Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain." We can be happy NOW, we can dance NOW (even if it's in our living rooms!) because we have a lot to be hopeful for. The hyacinth may be the 'flower of the rain' but that doesn't mean we can't see beyond the rain clouds. When you smell the perfume of the Hyacinth, close your eyes & feel the love. When planted in swathes, look at the sea of colours which reflect the blue skies & pastel countryside, & know that the little trumpet flowers herald a new beginning.