**Hippeastrum × johnsonii** Hort.  

*(Amaryllis × johnsonii, Amaryllis × johnstonii)*

- This taxon is also called Hardy Red Amaryllis or St. Joseph's Lily; Mr. Greg Grant of the Stephen F. Austin State University gardens reports this to be the first of the hybrid Amaryllis and attributes it to a cross between two South American species, *Hippeastrum reginae* (L.) W. Herbert (*Aschamia reginae, Amaryllis reginae*) and *Hippeastrum vittatum* (C.L. L'Hérilier de Brutelle) W. Herbert (*Amaryllis vittata, Chonais vittata*), produced by an Englishman named Johnson, hence the origin of the specific epithet.

- *Hippeastrum × johnsonii* represents the most reliably cold tolerant taxon of Amaryllis available for landscape use; it is cold hardy in USDA hardiness zones 8 to 11; this coarse textured evergreen perennial bulb has thick strap-like or long tongue-shaped leaves; leaves have a thick almost fleshy feel and are medium to dark green, sometimes glaucous when young; leaves are about a foot long and a couple of inches wide with a shallow V-shape in cross-section; foliage is about 12" to 15" tall with and equal or greater spread and flower scapes are held 6" to 8" above the foliage; small clusters of large red flowers of various shades with white streaking in the throats are produced in spring; colors are often not as vibrant as the Dutch Hybrid Amaryllis which are of complex hybrid heritage and available in a wider range of colors; however, these complex hybrids are often not hardy outside of subtropical conditions (USDA hardiness zones 9 or 10) and are often used as forced potted plants or as annual bulbs in colder climates.

- Culture is fairly easy, avoid excessive moisture or severe drought; full to partial sunny sites are suitable as long as soils are well drained; protect the bulbs in winter with mulch but do not overwater; Hardy Amaryllis will slowly increase from offset bulbs to form colonies; old established plantings can be impressive; rogue out any plants with a yellowish streaked flowers or foliage as this may indicate viral infections which can spread, debilitating the planting.

- The old-fashioned Hardy Amaryllis should be used more extensively in our regional landscapes and will increase in value over time as the larger bulbs produce more flowers and will begin to form a colony from offsets; they can be used in perennial borders, cut flower gardens, as a seasonal edging or brought indoors for winter or early spring forcing; the Dutch Hybrid Amaryllis make excellent forced bulbs with extremely rich colors and very large trumpet-shaped flowers that last for several days each; these forced bulbs make nice seasonal patio plants where temperatures permit.

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