

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian **Naturally Naked**

By Cynthia Brian



Lighter pink Naked ladies shine at night.

Photos Cynthia Brian

"Nature loves to hide." Heraclitus

In the winter, these ladies are wrapped in lush green mantles that glisten in the rain. When warmer weather commences in late spring, their coats turn brown and eventually dry out. This is when we pull off their straps, leaving them lumpy and bumpy, hiding in plain sight. Sitting silently, they endure all measure of inconspicuousness. Then a sudden surprise transpires as they push their long slender necks skyward, shimmering in the summer sun.

Amaryllis belladonna—magic lily, resurrection lily, surprise lily—the stunning Naked ladies have arrived! Just as most perennials in the garden have taken their final bow, these breathtaking bulbs fill my orchard and garden with their picture-perfect pink flowers. What began with the gift of a single bulb many years ago, has metamorphosed into a fabulous field of dreams because every season I dig up a few bulbs to plant in other areas.

Amaryllis belladonna is the botanical name of the flower, "Naked



With blue agapanthus and red-veined Chinese lantern as a background, Naked ladies are magical.

lady". Belladonna means "beautiful lady" in Italian. These plants are called Naked Ladies because of their unique bloom pattern. In the winter, the bulbs produce a bounty of beautiful, shiny green leaves like the leaves of agapanthus. Those leaves wither and die in spring around the same time that the strappy leaves of daffodils are browning. With so many bulbs, it takes me awhile to remove and compost the dead leaves. With the leaves gone, dirt-colored bulbs resemble rough turtle shells as their rounded heads form clusters. In August, single stems sprout from the ground. Finally, flowers emerge at the top of the stems giving them a striking appearance as if they're "naked" because they are standing alone without leaves.

Here are some key things to know about Naked ladies:

Appearance: Naked ladies produce tall, elegant stems that can reach up to two feet in height, bearing masses of trumpet-shaped flowers that are usually pink, but can also be white or red. My Naked ladies showcase either a deep pink or blush color.

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