

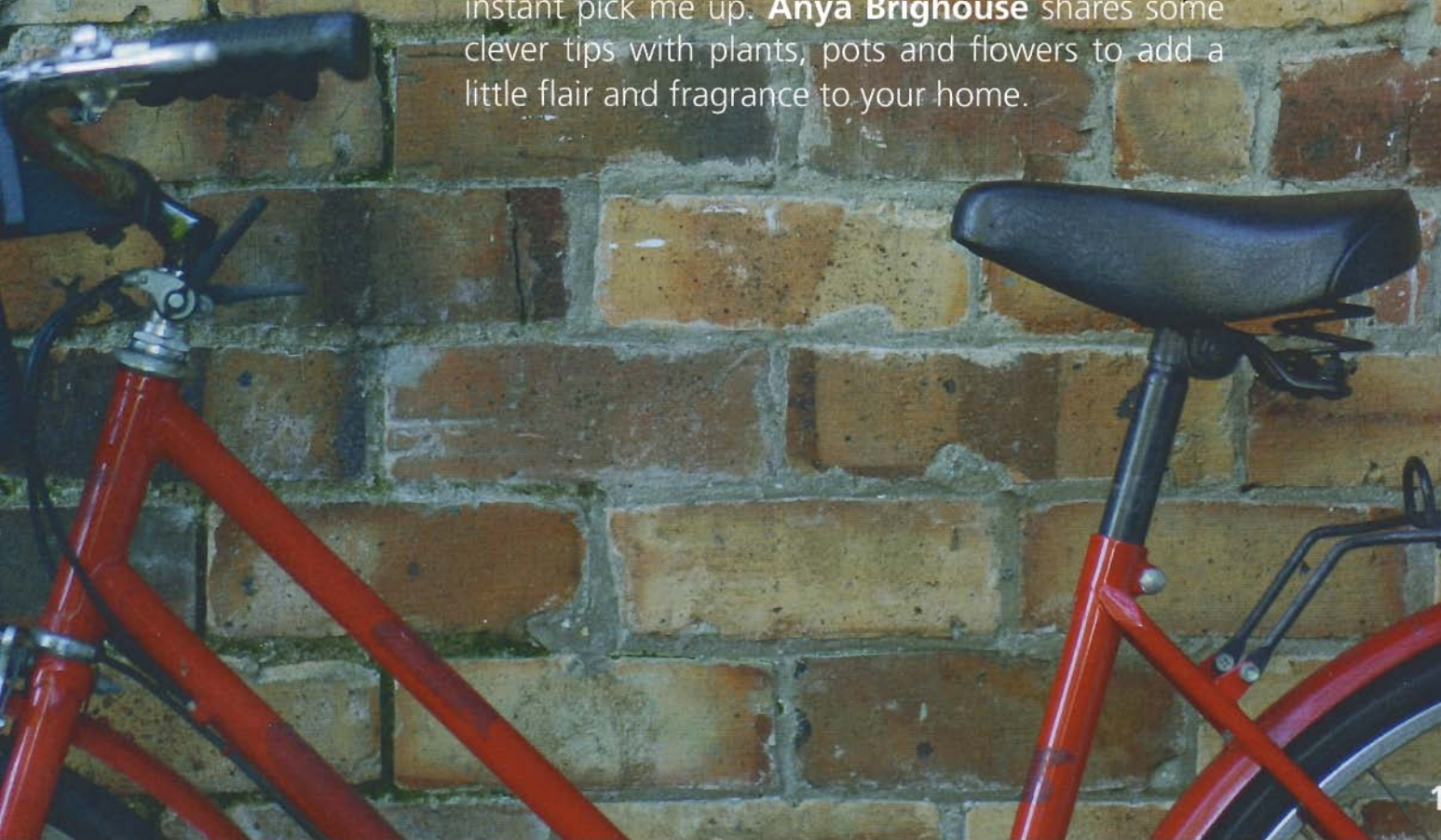
home a haven

10 ideas



cheap & cheerful

You don't have to look too far a field to find an instant pick me up. **Anya Brighouse** shares some clever tips with plants, pots and flowers to add a little flair and fragrance to your home.



I have a very dear friend who adores flowers. They are always in her home whenever I visit, and I have come to the conclusion that the flowers are, first and foremost, for her own enjoyment, and not just to impress visitors. Even if she is staying somewhere away from home, the first thing she will do is buy some flowers and put them in her room to make the space her own and also, I think, just because she just loves them.

We often buy flowers for a special occasion or when we have people coming over. It feels very frivolous to put flowers in the house just for ourselves, doesn't it? I sometimes do it for myself when my husband is away for a period of time and I need cheering up. I have found this a little harder recently as prices have gone up and the flowers are eating into the food budget! So for this article I have tried to get as much as possible for as little as possible on the flower front!

The lovely Davina Prankerd from VIDA FLORES in Newmarket has come to the party and I have included some of her considerable expertise with flowers. I first met her 15 years ago when she opened a tiny shop in Auckland's High St, where she showed her wonderful flair with simple, good quality flowers. She continues to "let the flowers do the talking" at a time when getting flowers can sometimes be more about the packaging than the flowers themselves.

1 Living wreath using succulents

This wreath was made for the outside table at Christmas and is still looking great. We have hung it on a brick wall now that winter has arrived. It needed watering during the hot summer months but in the winter and spring seasons, the rain is sufficient.

To make a wreath, cut a strip of chicken wire mesh and line it with moss, then with soil and then more moss. Roll up the soil and moss filled wire mesh to form a sausage shape. Trim off ends of wreath with sharp cutters and bring together both ends to form a circle. Secure the wreath ends with florists' wire or clear fishing line. Use a screwdriver to poke holes through the moss for cuttings. Work around the wreath adding a mixture of cuttings for

colour and form. Water well and the cuttings will take root. It looks fabulous on an outdoor table with the sun-umbrella.

2 Herbs

Herbs are another cheap and cheerful way to 'add the organic' wherever you may need it. The herbs we used came from my local greengrocers for \$1.95 each. They are always cheap at your local Kings Plant Barn, as are the terracotta pots you could put them in. The pots were between \$3.00 and \$5.00. During the summer, I put a big mass of them on an outside table in different sized pots. Just before people arrive for lunch or whatever, I run my hands through the herbs and the smells are marvellous! You also get to cook with them too! When the plants get too tired, just replace them, but with a good bit of care and trimming they can last the whole summer.

3 Simple is Beautiful

Simple is always best. Try and keep flowers 'en masse' – all the same. That way they are not fighting with each other! I love tulips but my special favourites are Casablanca lilies, as they were my wedding flowers. It is still my most decadent thing to get a whole mass in a big white vase for the table. My husband sneezes like mad with them but he puts up with it, because he knows how much I love them.

For this shot we did purple tulips that had not quite opened; they look quite different once they fully open. Watch out for the double headed ones – they are simply amazing. The foliage finishes them off. The vase is part of the new 'Republic Revolution' range and was \$27. There is a smaller size for \$24. Both of them are a simple modern statement.

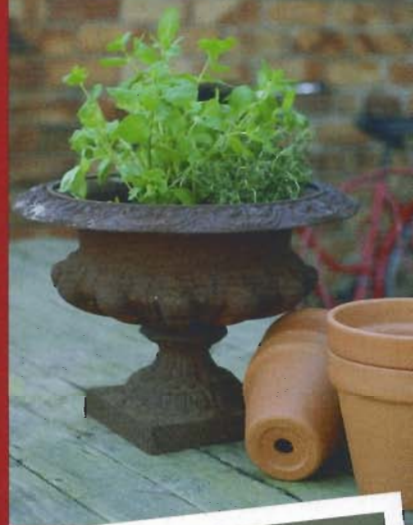
4 Even simpler...

I love heliconias and birds of paradise. They are simple, exotic and sculptural. The heliconia on its own is a statement! They are also long lasting. I also love twisted bamboo with a simple tropical leaf. They need to be in a large simple container: big old bottles, old clay jugs or the like.

hot tips on caring for your flowers

ALWAYS recut your flower stems on an angle and place directly into fresh water. Most flowers prefer warm water, like us. Change your water every two days, a drop of bleach in the water is good for keeping bacteria at bay. Ensure your vases are clean, dirty vases will only reduce the life of your flowers. The best way to clean them is fill with water and leave soaking with bleach in them over night. Do not place in direct sunlight, this will turn the water sour as well as kill your flowers. If your flowers feel soft and wilted re-cut and place in deep water (preferable up to their heads) for a couple of hours then return to the vase. Fresh water is the key to your flowers lasting.

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hot tips from Davinia Prankerd Best flowers of the months

January Anthuriums Put them in a vase at the bach and they will last the entire holiday.

February Roses for love

March Lisianthus Pretty, feminine & lasting

April Gerberas Only ever one colour 'en masse'

May Oriental lilies Casablanca's are every body's favourite

June Tulips Get them tight in bud and watch them still grow in your vase

July Orchids Buy big strong stems and they will last well, better to pay a little more and get good ones

August Daffodils Love the double ones but don't forget Cancer Societies Daffodil Day

September Stock Always put a little bleach in the vase. Their fragrance reminds you of cloves which adds a warm spicy scent to your home

October Winter rose Soft white pinks and greens look like they have just been gathered from the garden

November Peonies The first peonies are as exciting as the first strawberries of the season. Don't expect any more than to be wowed by these gorgeous blooms and let them shatter over your table as they're beautiful then too

December Longiflorum (Christmas) Lilies, fill the house with Christmas cheer

Any time Singapore orchids in all their gorgeous tropical colours. **Anthuriums** because they last such a long time and are so sculptural and dramatic. **Phalaenopsis** - cant be beat

Don't be afraid of foliage

A vase full of simple leaves and branches makes a statement. **Ruskus** gorgeous colour and lasts for months. **Magnolia** but not in autumn when the growth is new. **Camellia** especially when it is flowering. Large tropical leaves like **Monstera Red cornus** (dogwood) holds its gorgeous colour. **Willow** golden, twisted, whatever you can get.

5 Steal from your garden

We often overlook our own gardens. Just because things don't look very interesting on a bush, it doesn't mean they can't be beautiful in a vase. When we put in our garden nine years ago – and I am the first to admit I am not really a garden person – I had a list of flowering scrubs that I loved and basically we worked the garden around those. I have fragrant honeysuckle and daphne; they do not look spectacular but they can change a room in an instant with their beautiful scents. Before the Grandparents arrive the children often cut lavender and put them in a vase or bottle so the room smells nice. (What is it with children and lavender?) We put in gardenias, azaleas and camellias and I was a happy woman. In a perfect world I would also have put in a magnolia tree, but we never did it – I will make sure one goes in the next garden!

For this shot, we just put fragrant daphne in two simple vases. They don't last very long but as the bushes at our place are quite large now, it is easy to replace them every couple of days.



6 Potted beauty

I chose a bromeliad for this shot. I love the tropical feel and the deep reds, but they also come in a variety of colours. They last a long time, as there is no flower to fade; they are flower-like in their own right. I just popped the pot

straight into a \$17 Kings Plant Barn pottery jug and away you go. I have had it at home for 3 weeks and it is ticking along nicely. I am not good at remembering to water things – luckily the bromeliad has resisted my attempts to kill it through neglect!

7 Pity you can't eat them

Ornamental cabbages may seem a strange idea, but they really are unusually beautiful. They come in a range of colours but these, and the more purple ones, are the ones I prefer. You can use them both as a kind of cut flower (as we have) or plant them and watch them slowly grow to the lovely proportions that we have them in. To obtain them, try at your local nursery around June.

8 Underwater beauty

The trick with keeping flowers underwater is to change the water as often as possible. I have used white Singapore orchids under water in a tall vase as centre pieces for an event and they looked amazing. Tulips look great submerged but only for a short time. They would make great flowers for a wedding.

9 Kids and flowers

I chose Primroses because they just can't be beat. We just used old peach tins that we painted and pierced holes in the bottom. We used colours from the new RESENE KIDS RANGE, which in my humble opinion is spectacular! I love the new range with lovely clean bright kids colours (just as it should be!) Comes as a great kids board game to play and decide what colours you like best. We used 'Clowning Around' (the purple), 'Yabadabadoo' (the aqua) and 'Tickled Pink' (obviously the pink).

10 A bit of a cheat but...

Fabric flowers really are a last resort for me. The beauty of flowers comes from their fragile, transient, 'organicness'! And, of course, their scent. Fabric flowers have improved greatly in the last 10 years, to the point you can hardly tell the difference, but I would still rather have real ones, any day. If you are going to use them, then the same rule applies as with real flowers: keep it simple. And make sure they don't get dusty! These hydrangeas were \$17 a stem (we used two) and came from Kings Plant Barn (again!) ■



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