

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

VASE OF AMARYLLIS

The large, colourful flowers of amaryllis always cheer me up when they flower in late winter, and I have now learned how to keep the bulbs from year to year, saving me the cost of buying new ones.

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*) remind me of my home in Poland. My granny and mum always grew them and the emerging flower stems were always a topic of discussion around the kitchen table. When the amaryllis finally bloomed, lighting up our home like floral fireworks, the whole family was informed, and everyone would come to admire them.

These bulbs are easy to grow, and you could try my favourites, 'Apple Blossom', with pale pink-infused white flowers, and 'Magic Green', which sports white flowers with green and dark red markings.

You will need

Tall vase or container

Horticultural grit

Bulb fibre or peat-free multipurpose compost mixed with a handful of horticultural grit

Amaryllis bulbs

Moss and pine cones (optional)

1. If your container doesn't have drainage holes, add a 2.5cm (1in) layer of grit, then a layer of bulb fibre or compost mix on top. Place the bulbs, pointed end facing up, on top, making sure that they are not touching.

2. Add some more compost, so that the top third of the bulbs are above the surface. I also add some moss, raked from the lawn, to keep

the bulbs slightly moist, and a few pine cones for decoration. Water very lightly around the bulbs to moisten the compost.

3. Place the vase in a warm, bright spot, and keep the compost damp but not wet. Stems will soon emerge from the bulbs, followed in a few weeks by the large, lily-like flowers.

4. To lengthen flowering time, once the flowers start to show, move the container to a cooler place. Turning it now and again to prevent the stems from bending towards the light. Do not allow your plants to dry out.

ANYA'S TOP MONEY-SAVING TIP

Rather than discarding the bulbs after flowering, keep them for the following year. Remove the old flower stems after they have faded, and continue to water the bulbs, adding a little all-purpose fertilizer every two weeks in spring and summer, and leaving the new foliage to grow. When the leaves turn in early autumn, cut them back to about 5cm (2in) from the top of the bulb. Remove the bulbs from the compost, and place them in a cool, dark place for a minimum of six weeks, then replant them as shown here.



1.



2.



3.



4.