

GROWING SUCCULENTS

Succulents are plants that are especially adapted to adverse growing conditions, particularly drought. Most do so by storing water in their leaves, stems or roots.

Succulents are a diverse group of plants. Most gardeners think of them as thorn less plants that store moisture in their leaves and stems. They usually consider cacti a totally separate group of plants.

Actually cacti are thorny, leafless succulents that store moisture in the stem. To be classified as a cactus, the plant must be a member of the cactaceae family, regardless of how it looks.

Succulents are easy to grow, making them ideal plants for folks who do not have time for plants which need frequent watering. They require little water and fertilizer and tolerate low humidity and a wide range of temperatures. They do prefer bright light.

The major problem in growing succulents is overwatering. This may happen if the soil is not well-drained or if the plants are watered too often. When this happens, the roots rot and the plant becomes mushy. Avoid this problem by using soils that contain large amounts of sand or perlite and by allowing the plant to totally dry out before watering again. Clay pots are preferable to plastic as they promote quicker drying.

Avoid winter fertilizing as most succulents are dormant then. Use a weak solution of a balanced fertilizer in the spring and summer. Keeping the plants at cool temperatures of about 50 degree F. in the winter often promotes flowering in the spring.

Succulents, other than cacti, include Jade plants and other members of the Crassula family, agaves, aloes, echeverias, sedums, hens-and-chicks, living rocks and kalanchoe. Good succulents for hanging baskets include Burro's tail, string-of-hearts, sedums, some peperomias and purslanes.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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