

Growing Succulents & Cacti

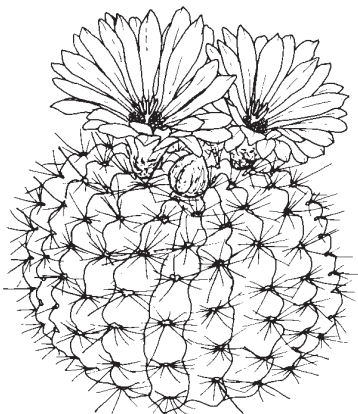
SUCCULENTS

Strictly speaking, a succulent is any plant that stores water in juicy leaves, stems, or roots to withstand periodic drought. Most succulents come from desert or semi-desert areas of the world, Mexico and South Africa are two very important sources. However, not all succulents can withstand exposure to hot sun—read species descriptions carefully.

Succulents can be grown everywhere as houseplants, but in the milder western climates many varieties are used as landscape plants—either as specimens in containers or planted in the open ground. Other smaller varieties may be useful among stepping stones or as ground covers. However they're used, succulents that are well grown and well groomed, add decorative value and interest all year 'round.

HOW MUCH WATER?

Most succulents are capable of surviving through extended drought, but all will drop leaves, shrivel and/or lose color as a result. It is a common misconception that succulents do not need water at all; all plants need water. The amount of irrigation depends on the amount of summer heat and the level of humidity in the atmosphere. Plants in hot interior valleys may need water every one to two weeks; while those growing near the coast will require far less. Remember: give plants enough water to keep them healthy, plump, and attractive.



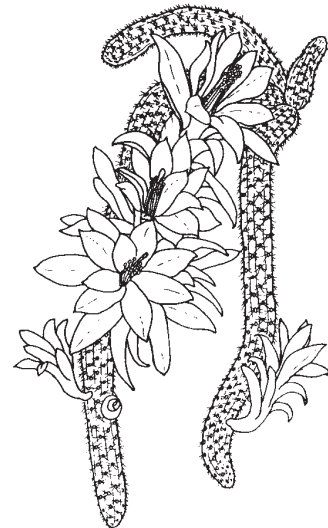
All succulents benefit from regular fertilizing. For most succulents in the ground one feeding at the beginning of the growing season is usually enough. Bone meal is often used for this because it breaks down over a

long period of time and releases nutrients to the plant very slowly. Containerized succulents require more frequent feeding; a half-strength solution of liquid fertilizer applied monthly, in spring and summer, is often recommended.

ALL CACTI ARE SUCCULENTS, BUT NOT ALL SUCCULENTS ARE CACTI

The cactus family, cactaceae, contains a large number of varied, succulent-type plants. These are generally leafless, with stems that have been modified into cylinders, pads, or joints that store water in times of drought. The flowers of cacti, which are what make a cacti a cacti—not the spines, are usually large and brightly colored as are the fruit, which may sometimes be edible.

Large types of cacti, for landscaping, require sun and well-drained soil. Water newly planted cacti very little; roots are subject to rot before they begin active growth. In four to six weeks, when new roots are active, water thoroughly, then let the soil dry before watering again. Reduce watering in fall to allow plants to go dormant. Feed monthly in spring and summer. This culture also applies to smaller forms of cacti used for pots and rock gardens.



Showiest in flower are those species native to jungle regions. These often grow as epiphytes in trees or on rocks. They need a soil rich with humus, partial shade, frequent watering, feeding, and above all protection from frost.

General Culture and Uses

GENUS	CULTURE	USES
Sempervivum Lewisia Saxifraga	Afternoon shade and moderate moisture in hot climates. Well-drained soil. Frost tolerant.	Good for rock gardens and trough gardens.
Sedum	Sun and moderate moisture in hot climates. Well-drained soil. Fairly frost tolerant.	Good for ground cover, rock gardens and trough gardens.
Euphorbia Cereus Cephalocereus Echinocactus Espostoa Ferocactus Kalanchoe Lemaireocereus Opuntia	Sun and low moisture in hot climates. Well-drained soil. Protect from frost.	Good for rock gardens, containers and specimen plantings.
Chamaecereus Coryphantha Echinopsis Gymnocalycium Lobivia Lobivopsis Mammillaria	Sun or light shade and low moisture in hot climates. Well-drained soil. Protect from frost.	Good for rock gardens and containers
Epiphyllum Hylocereus Rhipsalidopsis Selenicereus Schlumbergera	Afternoon shade and regular moisture and feeding. Well-drained soil. Protect from frost.	Good for containers—many useful in hanging containers.