

Tips for Success with Succulents

Soil

Succulents need well-draining soil so roots do not rot. **Use special cactus mix, or homemade soil mixture.**

Recipe for homemade cactus soil:

Mix 1 part each **perlite or vermiculite, coarse (builders) sand, good quality potting soil.**

Temperature

Most succulents prefer outdoor temperatures between 45 and 85 degrees F.

In Zone 6, it is best to grow succulents in containers so they can be moved indoors in winter.

Shelter succulents from cold and wet. Although some succulents are frost-hardy, they don't like moisture.

For dormant plants moved indoors in winter – 50-60 F optimal temperature.

Fertilizer

Apply a 10-10-10- fertilizer at half strength in late spring. May repeat at ¼ strength every 6 weeks only during growing season. NO fertilizer in fall/winter months

Light

Succulents need 4-6 hours of bright indirect sunlight daily. Some need more, some less. Read labels.

Full morning and late afternoon sun best is best because it is less intense. Strong sunlight can scorch leaves.

Succulents tend to stretch toward light, so rotate pot frequently to ensure balanced growth.

Haworthias and Sansevieria prefer low light and therefore make great houseplants.

In Zone 6, tender succulents should be brought indoors when it gets cold, and placed in a window that receives bright indirect sunlight most of the day. Inadequate light results in weakening and discoloration of succulent and stretching of leaves and stems. It may be necessary for you to supplement with indoor artificial light. (14-16 hours LED lighting per day at 6-12" above plant)

You may also choose to allow succulents to go dormant indoors in winter. Provide 4 hours light per day at ideal temperature of 50-59 F. (heated garage or basement with light) Dampen soil when dry.

After wintering indoors, reintroduce succulents to sunshine gradually once weather warms.

Water

Avoid over-watering! Allow soil to go dry between waterings...once a week or less should be enough during growth months. The plumper the succulent, the more water it holds and the less it needs. Check soil first!

Let the plant tell you when it needs water! Signs of underwatering – shriveling leaves or tips. Signs of overwatering - leaves turning yellow or falling off.

When watering during growing period, water thoroughly. DRENCH the plants so water flows out of bottom of pot. Do not use softened water. (Salt buildup)

In winter, water dormant plants only when soil is dry. (once a month or less) Give plant just enough water to dampen soil, as dormant plants are more prone to rot than when actively growing.

Propagating

Propagating succulents should be done at beginning of growth period (spring for most)

Succulent cuttings should be coddled. Root them first in moist cactus mix in shallow tray that drains.

For Stem Cuttings:

Cut stems 2-3 inches below their tips. Remove lower foliage, leaving just a few leaves at top of cutting. Set cuttings in cool, dry, shady spot for 4-7 days till raw tissue heals and forms a callus. Insert cuttings into slightly damp cactus mix in tray. 1-2 sets of nodes (spots where you removed leaves) need to be in growing media in order for roots to grow. Minimal watering and bright INDIRECT light is all cuttings need to root. Avoid direct sunlight, sprinkle with water every few days to keep barely moist. In 4-6 weeks, cuttings should have formed roots and be ready to transplant to larger container.

For Rosette with Stem:

Echeveria and some aloes grow at the tips of ever-lengthening stems. Cut stems an inch or so below rosette, allow cut end to heal and callus, and replant rosette in shallow hole in moist cactus mix. Place in indirect light, keep slightly moist. Within 4-6 weeks, the plant will begin forming roots. You may also remove leaves from stem and propagate those as described below. (Do not toss out headless, leafless stem, as it may produce new rosettes from leaf axils.)

For Leaf Cuttings:

Remove entire, undamaged, healthy leaves from rosette or from stem of plant. Allow leaves to heal and callus over in shaded area for 4-7 days. Once healed, place leaves on top of moistened cactus soil in tray with drainage holes. Place in indirect light, not direct sun. Sprinkle with water or use a spray bottle to mist leaves when soil is dry. Leaf will shrivel when no longer needed for nutrients. Plantlet can be repotted when 1-2" tall, and then moved to brighter light. (6-10 weeks are required for leaf cuttings to create viable plants.)

From Offsets or "Pups"

Brush away top soil until roots are visible. Wriggle offset free from parent plant. If connected by a stem to parent plant, cut stem to remove offset. Once free, allow offset to callus for 4-7 days. When callused, place "pups" in shallow hole in planting tray with moistened cactus mix. Fill in soil to stabilize plant. Place in indirect light, keep slightly moist for 4-6 weeks before planting in individual container.

Websites for ordering succulents online: altman plants.com; mountaincrestgardens.com; leafandclay.com; simply succulets.com; the succulent source.com