

Cactus & Succulents



How often should you water?

- There is no answer that is universally correct.
- The higher the light level and temperature and the less humid the more often watering is required.
- Some succulents are more complicated, depending on their hemisphere of origin, native land, or differing elevation (high or low). You need to learn the “winter growers” from the spring to “summer growers” and treat accordingly.
- Generally, plants from mountainous regions withstand greater cold (40°), and plants from low desert and coastal areas prefer a winter minimum near 50° (eg. Mesems & Melocactus)
- The majority of plants come from warm to hot-climate countries.

Some guidelines for watering:

- The most active time for most cacti is during the spring and early parts of summer (about 1/3 of the year).
- During this active period watering can be frequent and light fertilizer applied.
- Reduce the frequency of watering as winter approaches.
- Very little water is required during the cold months.
- Some plants will go dormant in the summer (eg. Aeonium)
- Watering once every two weeks (or ten days) in hot weather and once a month in the dormant period is a good point to start as you learn your plants needs.
- Another approach is when the soil is completely dry, water thoroughly then let dry. If in doubt, don't water.
- They are more tolerant of neglect than most plants and have a great capacity for survival.

How much sunlight do my plants need?

- Direct sun and light are not the same!
- Succulent plants need light but they grow better if they don't cook in the midday sun.
- In the wild you will find young plants tucked under a bush, tree or something else that provides filtered light.
- Signs to look for:
 1. Plant is pale green and elongated = needs more light
 2. Plant facing the light source is yellow, tan, red or indented = getting too much light.
- Consider micro-climates in your yard.

What kind of soil / soil mix do I use?

- Most commercial potting soils are too rich in fresh organic matter for these plants
- Soil should allow food, water and air to get to the roots and be porous enough to let water drain through.
- Many soil mixtures will work: of a low peat planter mix and pumice (50/50). Other added ingredients might include: sand, small pebbles, vermiculite

- **A typical succulent mix:** 2 parts soil; 1 part peat moss; 1 part perlite; 1 part coarse sand
- **Another typical mix (preferred):** 1/3 potting mix, 1/3 clean sand (coarse), and 1/3 pumice.
- Experiment with different combinations to discover the right combination for your conditions.
- A top dressing of crushed granite or pea gravel looks good and keeps the topsoil from drying out faster than the rest of the soil in the pot,
- Remember: A small pot dries out faster than a large pot does; adjust the soil mix for that size pot to be almost dry in a week.

Should I use Fertilizer?

Too much fertilizer can be worse than none at all.

Use a low nitrogen fertilizer at about ½ to ¼ the recommended rate.

Some Great Websites to Visit:

Metal Wreath Form (w/netting and sphagnum)

<http://www.mosserlee.com>

<http://forgetmenotlandscapedesign.com/succulent-wreath/>

Purse Topiary:

<http://www.youngs-garden.com/blog/succulent-plant-purse-topiary/>

Shoes, Purses, etc. Click on “Deco Basket Collection”

<http://www.supermoss.com>

Florafelt – living wall panel (w/root wrappers)

<http://www.plantsonwalls.com>

Succulent Gardens: The Growing Grounds.

Open Monday through Saturday 8am to 4pm. 2133 Elkhorn Road, **Castroville**, CA 9501 (831) 632-0482 <http://sgplants.com>

How to become a member of the Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

Visit: <http://www.fresnocss.org> for membership information.

Books:



Succulents Simplified: Growing, Designing, and Crafting with 100 Easy-Care Varieties, by Debra Lee Baldwin

Succulent Container Gardens: Design Eye-Catching Displays with 350 Easy-Care Plants, by Debra Lee Baldwin

Designing with Succulents, by Debra Lee Baldwin

Information sources:

Cactus Lands at <http://www.cactuslands.com/plants.htm>

Grigsby Cactus Gardens at <http://www.cactus-mall.com/>

University of Florida at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu>

Author: Ruth Saludes, MG Smart Gardening Conference, February 22, 2014