

November 11, 2019



Coffee Mug Succulent Garden

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UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

What could be better than starting the day with a steaming, fragrant mug of morning coffee? Imagine that another mug held a colorful, easy-care garden, chock-full of amazing succulents. Now that would be perfect!

Anyone can make and enjoy this simple gardening project, using creative, repurposed, free, or inexpensive containers. Large mugs or coffee cups can be had by simply perusing the back of your own kitchen cabinets, or heading to a thrift or dollar store.

Let's get started. Once you have chosen your mug, you can carefully drill a drainage hole in the bottom, using a ceramics drill bit. An easier alternative for drainage would be to add a layer of pebbles to the bottom of your mug. This will allow water to drain below the pebbles, and not cause your plants to be waterlogged.

The right type of soil is important. You can choose store bought, prepared cactus, palm, or citrus soil, which is fast draining and enriched with plant food to give your succulents a good start. Or, you can use regular potting soil, but add perlite and gritty sand to lighten the soil and enhance drainage.

Now it's time for the plants. Succulents are relatively inexpensive to purchase, and can be no cost to propagate if you already have some growing in your garden. You can also ask friends to share some cuttings with you. My experience is that gardeners are very generous in sharing plants!

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I chose five easy to grow, popular succulent varieties: 1) *Echeveria*, with its pretty rosettes. 2) *Graptopetalum*, also called leather petal or ghost plant. 3) *Sempervivum*, commonly called chicks and hens, 4) *Sedum*, cute little pork and beans, and 5) *Lampranthus blandus*, "Pink Vygie."

Time to plant. Add a layer of small pebbles on the bottom of mug. Then fill the mug three-quarters full with fast-draining soil mix. Use a chopstick to make stem holes, and carefully cover roots with soil. Leave space to add a final layer of pretty pebbles or small shells to cover the exposed topsoil and complete the project.

You can add a number of different plants in this small garden. Succulents like to be crowded. Or, one dramatic plant will highlight your mug. The choices are infinite!

Succulents are easy-care, but not no-care. Light and water are important. Choose a location with lots of light, but not direct sun for extended periods of time. A shaded patio table or partially sunny kitchen window works well.

The soak and dry method of watering works perfectly for succulents. Initially, make sure that your garden mug is thoroughly watered, but not flooded. If you think you overwatered, carefully tip mug over to drain excess water. Let your garden dry out before watering again. Check for dryness with your finger. Remember, overwatered succulents will turn to mush and die!

After completing this easy gardening project, it is time to relax, drink your coffee, and enjoy your tiny Succulent Garden in a Mug!

On Wednesday, November 13th, Master Gardeners will discuss succulents in a Succulent Bowl class. This free class is from 9:00 a.m. to noon, at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park. See you there!

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, See our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master a Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512, or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on the website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration Garden](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden) for more information and days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener e-news. Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram; we hope you enjoy our postings and will share them with your friends.