

How To Grow Succulents From Cuttings

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, March 30, 2018

Q: I have admired the big wall hangings of succulents, but I cringe at the price of these beautiful succulent arrangements. Can you tell me how start my own succulents? I have several small succulent plants and I have heard that they are easy to root but every time I have tried, the cuttings rot before they root.

A: Succulents are easy to propagate but you do need to callus the end of the stem or leaf petiole before you place it in soil. To callus, take the leaf or stem cutting from the mother plant, place it in a warm dry place out of direct sunlight. It works best if the cuttings receive bright light but no direct sunlight. When taking the leaf from the mother plant make sure to get the entire leaf—you do not want to break the petiole end off of the leaf. I like to let the cuttings set about a week before placing them in soil. You can place them in soil sooner if the stem end or the part where the leaf was attached to the stem has callused. The callus is where the end dries and hardens a bit.



(Photo: Contributed photo)

Once the succulent leaf has been allowed to callus, place the leaf flat on top of a good cactus soil mix. Providing good drainage and aeration in the soil is essential to preventing the cuttings from rotting. If you do not have a cactus soil mix you can amend traditional potting mix by adding 50 percent coarse perlite or pumice rock to improve drainage. Stem cuttings can be placed in the soil or laid on top. You can place the cuttings directly into one of the wall hanging containers or frames and use the leaves or stem cuttings to make attractive looking designs. Leave these lying flat in an area that gets bright light but little direct sunlight. Once the succulents start to root and grow into plants you will have a beautiful design that you can then hang on a wall or post.

While the cuttings are rooting, water sparingly. You want the soil to stay slightly moist but never wet. Water management is one of the biggest factors in keeping succulents healthy. Succulent plants like to approach dryness before being watered.

Succulent plants tend to like an environment that has good quality light, but not too much direct sunlight. This is especially important for the Redding area where we get relentless sunlight in the summer. Place your succulent plants on a north facing wall or in light shade where they get only a couple of hours of morning sun during the hotter months of the year. This will allow plants to thrive and develop good color without getting sunburned or dried out.

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.