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Undemanding Succulents Pair Well with Drought-tolerant Perennials By Lee Oliphant, Master Gardener



Q. How can I make my drought tolerant Mediterranean perennial garden more interesting?

A. Adding bold, dramatic succulents to a drought tolerant Mediterranean garden can have a vivid effect on the eye. Whether you are looking for a maintenance-free, mild-climate hedge, an eye-catching focal point, or ground cover between stepping-stones, there is a succulent to fit your

needs. When intermingling succulents, or in fact, any groups of plants, be sure they have similar requirements for sun, water, and soil.

The unique foliage of agaves and aloes fit well into a Mediterranean perennial garden. Variegated varieties add visual interest and pair well with Mexican sage (*Salvia leucantha*) with its purple spires. Dwarf agaves provide drama in smaller perennial gardens and the reds, oranges and yellows of aloe flowers add a contrast of color to the lavender and purple so prevalent in Mediterranean gardens. For an interesting visual effect in areas where temperatures fall below 30 degrees, grow succulents in natural or glazed pots and move them to a protected area during extreme temperatures.

By nature, succulents have the capacity to store water in their leaves and retain it until needed. Plants that are able to survive in a Mediterranean climate are similar in that they are able to go long periods without rain. Succulent requirements are little other than sun or semi-shade and good drainage. They will not tolerate saturated soil. If you have heavy clay soil it is best to use succulents on slopes and/or incorporate sand and gravel into the soil and create a mounded bed for them.

Once established, succulents are low maintenance. They need only to have their blooms removed, a light feeding in the spring, and just enough water to keep their leaves plump.