University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

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Garden Notes

GN 175

SUCCULENTS

The south and west afternoon summer sun in the Sacramento region is brutal. For full sun plants, select an area that is in full sun, generally 4 - 6 hours, not all day.

Use well-draining soil, such as cactus mix. Add pumice to increase drainage. Cactus mix and pumice are readily available at local garden centers and on the internet.

Succulents like acidic water. A 5.5 - 6.5 pH is ideal. Use a pH meter to check your water. For the majority of the Sacramento region the water is alkaline. To acidify the water, add 1 - 2 T vinegar per gallon of water. Alternatively, use a fine grain citric acid for a gentler alternative (1/2 tsp. citric acid = 2 T vinegar).

Full Sun Succulents

Agave, Aeonium. Summer dormant.
Aloe - larger species.
Cotyledon tomatosa, Bear's Paw. Also grows in shade.
Crassula, Jade Plant. Also grows in shade.
Sedum morganianum, Donkey's Tail. Also grows in indirect light.
Euphorbia tiracalli, Firestick
Faucaria, Tiger Jaws
Graptopelalum, Ghost Plant
Pachyphytum
Sedum, Stonecrop
Senecio, Blue Chalk Sticks
Sempervivum, Hen & Chicks
Yucca

Low Light Succulents

Agave attenuate, Foxtail agave
Aloe - smaller species
Curio rowleyanus, String of Pearls
Echevaria
Kalanchoe
Kalanchoe tomemtosa, Panda Plant
Hoya - Wax Plant
Seneco

Plant types best suited for Sacramento region

Agave
Aloe species (not hybrids): ferox, pubescent, wickensii, pillansii
Crassulaceae: *Echevaria, Sempervivum Sedum, Crassula*
Euphorbia: desmondia, ferox, horrida, globosa, pillansi, polygona, stellaspina
Mesmbryantheums: Cheroidopsis, Delosperma, Ice Plant

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Succulent Dormancy Table

Dormancy in Northern Hemisphere plants is caused by chemical changes within plant cells. It is stimulated by cooling temperatures and shorter days in late summer and fall. This "binds" water so it cannot freeze and injure plant cells. To break dormancy, plants must first go through a period of cold (about 40˚F or colder) for an average of 63 days. This cold period triggers changes which, when warm weather appears allows plants to "deharden" and resume growth. Source: James Feucht, PhD, 2005 Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Winter Dormant, Summer Growers (repot in March)
This group has adapted to our northern hemisphere cycle and are dormant from November through February. Many of these will also enter a pseudo rest period for a few weeks during the hottest part of the summer before putting on a final burst of growth in September and October.

Adenia, Adenium, Agave, Alluadia, Brachystelma, Bursera, Calibanus, Ceropegia, Cissus, Cyhostemma, Didieria, Dorstenia, Echeveria, Encephalartos, Euphorbia, Ficus, Fockea, Hernia, Ibervillea, Ipomoea, Jathropha, Lithops, Monadenium, Moringa, Operculicarya, Pachypodium, Pedilanthus, Plumeria, Pseudolithos, Pterodiscue, Raphionacme, Sempervivum, Siningia, Stapelianthus, Synadenium, Tillandsia, Trichecaulon, Trichodiandema, Xerosicyos

Summer Dormant, Winter Growers (repot in August)
This group is dormant during warmer months of May through August. Their primary growth actually occurs during autumn and spring while slowing considerable during true winter. Many will exhibit marginal growth during the summer months especially in the Lilly and Crassulaceae families. These plants prefer no or little summer water.

Adromischus, Aeonium, Aloe, Anacampseros, Astroloba, Avonia, Bowiea, Bulbine, Ceraria, Conophytum, Cotyledon, Crassula, Dioscorea, Dudleya, Fouqueria, Gasteria, Gibbaeum, Graptopetalum, Graptoveria, Haemanthus, Haworthia, Kalanchoe, Neohenricia, Othonna, Pachycormus, Pachyphytum, Pachyveria, Pelergonium, Peperomia, Portulacaria, Sansevieria, Sarcocaulon, Sedeveria, Sedum, Senecio, Stomatium, Sulcorebutia rauschii, Talinum, Tylecodon.

Making Changes - Timing
When to repot, prune excess growth, take cuttings or physically disturbing your plants is closely related to dormancy. Succulents differ from many other types of plants when making changes. You do not want to disturb them when they are resting. Rare, slow growing species, are particularly sensitive and drastic changes can be fatal.

When repotting, wait until you see signs of new growth. Shaping or trimming back excess growth is best done before the growth period. For summer growers this would be March and for winter growers, it would be August. Fast growing species can usually be reported or pruned anytime.

For Additional Information

- UC Master Gardeners of Sacramento County: sacmg.ucanr.edu
- Fair Oaks Horticulture Center, Fair Oaks, CA workshop and location information: ucanr.edu/workshops
- The Complete Book of Cacti and Succulents, Terry Hewitt
- Succulents Simplified, Growing, Designing, & Crafting, Debra Lee Baldwin
- Succulent Obsession, A Complete Guide, Ken Shelf
- Hardy Succulents, Tough Plants for Every Climate, Gwen Moore Kelaidis

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