



## Succulent Garden Design Information

Many homeowners decide to remove their lawns and/or redo their landscapes into a more waterwise option. Often the resulting flat terrain with rocks, a few plants or a large boulder is stark and uninteresting. Succulent garden landscapes can be so much more.

**Key to succulent garden success=Drainage.....prepare your soil with that in mind.**

Using rakes and shovels mix into your existing soil the following materials: 1/2 organic material (compost) + 1/4 sharps + 1/4 pumice (holds onto water and air) Pumice is a porous volcanic rock. It can absorb rainwater that puddles around plants to help prevent root/crown rot, improve drainage and aeration in soil. Don't let the supplier talk you into a small red volcanic rock. It is NOT the same! Lava rock has different properties.

After the lawn removal process and the addition of the above soil preparation materials the area can be a flat boring space. Use your imagination and bring in more amended soil to create mounds and dig out swales in this flat area to create some varying elevations and interest. Don't let *analysis paralysis* stop you! Make the best decision you can but be mentally prepared for failures here and there. Failures are opportunities to learn. Gardening keeps us humble. Make your goal simple and take action. Nobody enjoys being wrong, but being willing to be wrong can help you get started. Succulents are very forgiving. If you get stuck, ask a friend, change your perspective, etc.

### **3 MAIN PRINCIPLES OF GARDEN DESIGN**

**SCALE:** proportion between 2 or more sets of dimensions (garden structures/house/boulder/between plants). When you initially place these elements (plants, boulders, etc), plan for the future.

Situate the large rocks and boulders to provide design interest and to provide frost and sun protection for the plants.

When placing the plants utilize these small protections and the large protections offered by existing elements like structures and large plants already in place.

Remember to research your plants growth habits so that you know how they are most likely to grow both up and out as they mature.

You will want to display all the beautiful plants you have selected to their best advantage and to insure that they have the best chance to thrive.

**BALANCE:** the visual weight on either side of a focal point of interest. This can include at the largest scale, house vs the yard, one side of the yard vs another (on either side of the front door), a boulder vs the plants, or on a micro scale by displaying symmetrical and asymmetrical. All these examples will create interest and variety in your garden.

SYMMETRICAL: formal same = same

ASYMMETRICAL: balance achieved by using different objects of varying weights/sizes

**PERSPECTIVE:** draws the viewers eye into a space (include varying perspectives in your yard, a place to sit, etc) diagonals help expand a space

**FOCAL POINT:** place for the eye to rest: examples: an accent boulder, a piece of driftwood, a large specimen plant, etc.

Rocks have a place in your landscape. They create specific focal points as well as varying heights and textures. They have an additional important function in the succulent garden as most of these plants come from rocky soils. The larger accent boulders provide some shelter for the plants and, coupled with the small top dressing rocks, can mimic the succulent's natural habitat. This top-dressing of the soil with small rocks adds texture and keeps that precious amended soil in place when the wind blows. Top dressing rocks also insulate the soil beneath them (cool retains more moisture) and helps to keep water away from the undersides of the plants by supporting and lifting the leaves up off the soil. This will help to prevent crown and root rot in the plants. The top dressing rocks will also help to keep the weeds at bay.

**TIPS:**

- Adding mounds, slopes and swales will create interest and help with improved drainage. Including them in your succulent garden will also provide some frost and sun protection for your plants.
- Add non-succulent plants to your succulent garden for different effects and interest. Remember to only plant plants that have similar cultural needs as the succulents. (examples: water needs, sun coverage etc.)
- When possible, select areas that receive extended morning light to position your plants to avoid the hot afternoon sun. Position your rocks, mounds and swales and use surrounding existing landscape structures and plants to create these small shelters from the hottest midday sun for your succulents.
- When planting echeveria, to avoid elongation or flattening, make sure they receive at least two hours of bright light and plant rosettes at an angle to allow centers to drain off the rain and irrigation water.
- Wash off any soil left on your plants after planting and when adding any additional amended soil as the garden matures.
- Regularly check your plants for disease and/or pest infestations and to check their general happiness factor.

**REVIEW:** Drainage is the key=succulents need well-draining soil; know your yard's microclimates, research plants cultivation needs – RIGHT PLANT/RIGHT PLACE

For pest management research this link:

[UC IPM=Integrated Pest Management website](#)

Microclimate definition and examples

[UC Master Gardeners Marin County](#)

Basic Succulent Care

[UC Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County](#)

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