
HOUSEPLANTS DEPARTMENT



CACTUS & OTHER SUCCULANTS

By Dee Beckman

Cacti and succulents are some of the most interesting, satisfying and are among the easiest plants to grow. In nature they endure the most extreme conditions. They will still need specific requirements in order to produce and keep a healthy specimen. These instructions for care are general. Some unusual varieties may have more specific needs. Please consult your plant care professional for additional information.

WATERING
LIGHT

SOIL and CONTAINERS
FEEDING and PESTS

WATERING

The basic rule for most cacti and succulents is to water thoroughly when the soil is dry (Allow the soil to go almost completely dry between watering). The plants will require more frequent watering during spring and summer. The watering may be reduced to occasionally in late fall and winter. Over watering may cause the plant to rot, whereas under watering will cause shriveling and lack of vigor.

LIGHT

Cactus and succulents thrive in sunny locations and require at least two to three hours of direct sunlight daily however, direct southern exposure during the winter months may be too extreme and can cause damage to the plant (slowly acclimate the plant by increasing the sun exposure over a couple of weeks). A few varieties of succulents prefer shadier conditions (Aloe Vera for example). Careful observation is important when placing a plant in it's new location.

SOILS and CONTAINERS

Cactus and succulents can be grown in a wide variety of containers. The container should have plenty of drainage (drain hole required). Plastic or ceramic will dry more slowly. Clay pots will dry out more quickly and evenly. It is important that the soil medium used is coarse and well drained. Excellent commercial brands like **Crump Cactus Soil** are available.

FEEDING and PESTS

Cactus and succulents will need regular feedings. Feed the plant during the active growing months (March through October). An All-purpose fertilizer like a 20-20-20 half strength, used about every other watering, to up to once a month is sufficient.

Make sure that you water in the plant first with clear water before you fertilize. Succulents have few pests but some can occasionally be a problem. The most common is the mealy bug, characterized by white cottony masses under the leaves or on the body of the plant.

Remove the insect by using either rubbing alcohol on a cotton swab or washing the plant with liquid dish soap and water. Commercial sprays are available for extreme cases, use caution, as some formulations will cause a toxic effect towards the plant.

Many books are available on cactus and succulents. Tagawa's offers free classes to further your knowledge of these fascinating plants.