



Succulent Care

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Succulents are plants that store moisture in their leaves and stems. The Latin name, *succa*, means sap or juice. There are over 10,000 succulent plants, including cacti; many are native to South America, Madagascar and the Caribbean. By storing water in their leaves and stems, they can easily adapt to dry conditions.

Succulents are easy to grow and require little maintenance, making them a great starting point for beginners. They come in a variety of colors, shapes and textures, perfect for small spaces and help to create a welcome, natural design element in any home.

Benefits of growing plants include improving air quality through taking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen (photosynthesis). Some

varieties, such as aloe, help with

cuts and burns by applying the juice and gel of the leaves. Additionally, caring and tending to plants can lower stress, blood pressure and improve mood.

Visit a garden center for a good selection of succulents. Most varieties need at least half a day of sunlight. Before purchasing, be sure to read the instructional care tags to determine the best location for the plant, and what its needs and requirements are. Important factors to consider are soil, light and water.





Succulents require good drainage and proper **soil**. Pots should have drainage holes at the bottom to prevent root decay and fungal/bacterial issues. If there are no drainage holes, place coarse gravel at the bottom of containers to facilitate drainage. Pre-bagged succulent growth medium can be readily purchased or create your own by mixing one-part potting soil and one-part coarse sand. Fertilizing is recommended only a



Tiger Jaw

few times during the year throughout the warmer months. Use a household plant fertilizer and dilute to half the recommended rate.

Succulents need plenty of **light** to thrive. Six hours of direct daylight is preferred. Artificial lighting can also be used if there is not enough natural light. In spring and summer, transfer plants to outdoors. Transition gradually by putting them in the shade for a few days and slowly move to the sun. Avoid intense hot sun during mid-day. Return them indoors before the first freeze occurs in the fall.



Hens and Chicks





Jade

During the active growing season, plants need more **water**; in spring and summer, typically done once a week. Water only when soil becomes completely dry, by soaking the soil until water runs out of the drainage holes. Avoid watering small amounts frequently as this can cause distorted and poor growth. Watering recommendations may be slightly different for each variety of the plant. In the winter, plants need water just to prevent leaves from wilting, typically once every two to three weeks.

You can make a succulent garden by filling a wide, low container with drainage holes. Fill half with potting mix. Insert the plants and backfill with soil, pressing firmly to secure. Create interest and a focal point with tall and low-lying plants. Consider using plants with similar growth habits so they will not overcrowd. Several plants to consider are String of Pearls (*Curio rowleyanus*), Aloe Vera (*Aloe vera*), Flowering Kalanchoes (*Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*), Snake Plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*), Jade Plant (*Crassula ovata*), and Crown of thorns (*Euphorbia milii*).

References:

Penn State's [A Succulent Garden Brightens a Home](#)

West Virginia University's [Succulents 101](#)

