Caring for Succulents

Succulents have adapted to survive in dry and arid conditions by storing water in their leaves, stems, or roots. This means they have unique requirements compared to other house and garden plants.

Watering Your Succulents



Succulents need water, but over watering is a common cause of death. To avoid root rot, the soil around your succulent should dry in between waterings. If the soil is completely dry at least 1" below the surface, then it is time to water.

Water at the base of the plant so water does not sit on leaves or in the crown of the plant. Soak the soil, but then make sure all excess water can drain away. Watering in the morning allows excess water to dry up more easily.

Pots for succulents should have holes that allow for drainage. Make sure your potted succulent never sits in a saucer of water. Terra cotta pots are a good choice as they are porous and allow for evaporation of excess water.

Find a Good Spot for Your Succulent

Most succulents need 6 hours of bright, indirect sunlight daily. If indoors, a south-facing window is ideal. If your succulent is stretching (etiolating) toward the light, this is a sign it needs a location with more light.

Choose the Right Soil

Succulents need a fast-draining soil mix designed especially for cacti and succulents — a mix with perlite, pumice, or coarse sand. This prevents water logging and allows the roots to breathe. Fertilize sparingly during the growing season. Over fertilization can cause disfigurement in your succulents.



Observe Your Succulents for Clues

Wrinkled or shriveled leaves likely means you are underwatering. Soft, mushy leaves usually means overwatering as do leaves that split open.
Consider the season and your climate.
In the hottest of climates, succulents may need more water.
In fall and winter, most succulents go dormant and you should reduce watering frequency.
Always research your specific type.

UC SANTA CRUZ · ARBORETUM & BOTANIC GARDEN ·

arboretum.ucsc.edu