

*Master Gardener Program*

## Growing and Caring for Succulents

These plants come in a myriad of colors and shapes and are particularly easy to care for if you follow a few basic instructions. Here are some tips and information on how to care for these happy plants and ensure them a long, happy life with you."

- Succulents get their name from their ability to store nourishing materials--particularly water--in their leaves, stems or roots.
- Succulents are adaptable and durable and thus make great houseplants. They flourish in a variety of temperatures, and because they store water, they do not require frequent watering.
- Agave, aloe and jade are examples of succulents.
- When buying succulents, look for plants that show signs of new growth. Avoid plants that are affected by disease or pests. Signs of an unhealthy plant include spindly growth and pale leaves.
- Succulents love light, and a bright southern window works well for many.
- When moving plants indoors after a summer vacation outside, take care to avoid extreme temperature changes between indoors and out. Acclimate the plant over several days to its new environment. And make sure the plants are not bringing any critters with them when they come inside.
- Succulents such as cacti that grow in other states with the same growing zone as our area can stay outside in the winter here. Just be sure they stay dry. It is the combination of wet and cold that is fatal to cacti. They can endure the cold for a time as long as they are not wet.
- Be careful when replanting succulents because they are very sensitive during planting. The roots can break easily, and a gentle teasing is fine to spread the roots out from the plant. Most of the succulents are shallow-rooted so the roots should be near the surface, not planted too deep. Choose a pot that's not too big.
- Don't fertilize very often.
- Take care not to over-water the plants because this causes the roots to rot. Water when the plant starts to droop, or the leaves have indentations, or the plant starts to look a little gray (depending on the type of succulent). With something like a barrel cactus, water a bit once a month, and in the winter not at all.
- Use planting soil with good drainage characteristics. Coarse sand, perlite and organic materials make good additions to a soil mix for succulents. Plant succulents in a mixture of two parts coarse sand or perlite, one part organic material and one part garden soil.
- Make an interesting arrangement by grouping together succulents that have been potted in small, individual pots. Succulents do better in a relatively small amount of soil. Larger pots can make controlling the amount of moisture difficult and lead to poor health.
- A stem cutting is the easiest way to propagate most succulent plants. The best time to take a cutting is in the spring, after the plant's dormant period. Avoid making the cutting too long, as it will wilt before it can take root. Keep the cutting potted in an area with a temperature between 64 and 75 degrees. This is an excellent way to get many plants of the same species from one initial plant.