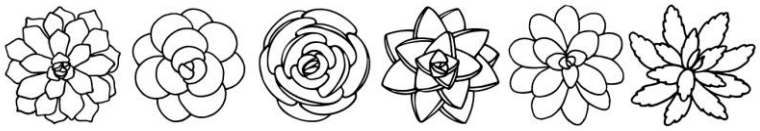
Moutan

FLOWERS • GARDENS • EVENTS

How to care for Succulents



Thank you for downloading this plant care guide. This guide is aimed at giving you some general information on how to care for your succulent plants. Further information can be found online on numerous sites by searching: how to care for succulents

The natural habitat & characteristics

- Plant group: cacti and succulents
- Vast number of varieties with interesting leaf forms and plant shapes.
- Identified by the following characteristics:
  - Thick fleshy leaves
  - Water stored in leaves, stems or roots
  - Cacti have specific sites where spines form – areoles
  - Succulents do not have areoles
- Arid conditions thriving in dry, bright conditions in desert or savannah areas from Africa to North America.
- Low moisture, good drainage soil and in high temperatures.
- Some are native to the tropics and temperate zone - growing as epiphytes, harmlessly upon other plants obtaining nutrients and moisture from the air.
- Some are winter flowering with a dormant phase in the Summer
- Others wake from dormancy in April.
- Understand the variety and try to mimic its natural habitat as best as possible.

A little bit of science

- Not all plants photosynthesise (the process in which green plants absorb light converting carbon dioxide using the chlorophyll in their leaves to make glucose) in the same way!
- Cacti & succulents use the Crassulacean acid metabolism (CAM) pathway which has evolved in plants living in arid conditions.
- Stomata (a pore on the leaf through which carbon dioxide is absorbed) is closed in CAM photosynthetic plants the during the hottest and driest part of the day to help reduce loss of water and instead open at night to start the process of photosynthesis.

- Most need all year-round bright light
- South facing window
- Some epiphytes need semi-shade
- Too much light leaves will turn brown or white
- Under-lit succulents suffer etiolation with elongated stem & widely spread leaves
- Can thrive in UK outdoors in Summer

- Fast draining mixture designed for cacti & succulents
- Normal potting compost mixed with inorganic agent such as perlite to increase aeration & drainage

- Allow compost to dry out between watering
- Tepid rain water is best – minerals in tap water can build up in soil and cause deposits on leaves
- Overwatering will encourage rot and plant will fail
- Underwatering will halt growing & plant sheds leaves. Brown spots may develop on leaves
- From April water freely & generously
- During Winter plants are dormant water once every other month (if not in overly heated rooms)
- Winter-flowering types require warmth & regular watering followed by a rest period in summer.
- Epiphytes will benefit from humid environment
- Feed established plants once a month during growing season with liquid houseplant or specialist liquid cacti feed

- Pruning is not always necessary.
- Use soft clean paint brush to remove dust from in and around plant
- Large leafed plants can be wiped with a clean damp cloth (pref soaked in tepid rain water)
- Recommended cutting specific to variety of plant:
  - **Branching**: side shoots & stem removed to produce cuttings
  - **Columnar**: stem cutting
  - **Clump-forming:** lift & divide offsets
  - **Fleshy leaves:** leaf cuttings
- Cuttings take time to dry & produce a callus on the wound (maybe up to 1 week)
- When dry, plant using John Innes No 1 with added grit & keep the compost dry to prevent the cutting rotting