



The Source for Beautiful  
Unusual and Exotic Plants



## A Basic Guide to Growing Cacti & Succulents-

### The Easy Indoor Plants

Cacti & Succulents make an easy transition from their native climates to that of our homes, offices, and greenhouses. As most of you know, their native habitat is fairly dry (less than 15" of rain per year), generally warm (70°F+ in summer and 50°F+ in winter), and the soil is composed mainly of sand and rock. They require very little care and attention, and most have little or no problem with pests and diseases. Most of them produce some type of flower during the year, and some are nicely fragrant such as the Night Blooming Cereus. A few, such as the Crown of Thorns, will bloom almost continuously throughout the year. Many other types of plants are often grouped with the succulents because they do well under similar conditions, including: Hoyas or Wax Flowers, Buddha's Belly Bush and other caudiciforms, and the Mother-In-Laws Tongues or Sansevierias.

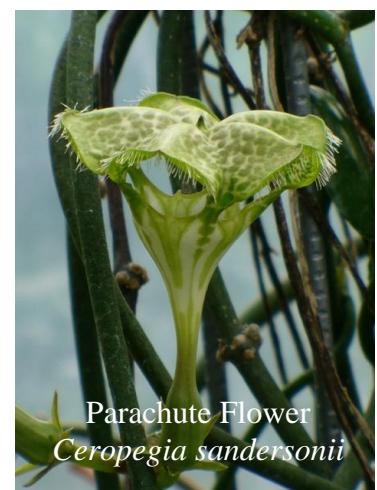
Under normal growing conditions cacti and succulents require minimal water, so if you go on vacation for a week, your cacti & succulents generally won't suffer for the lack of attention. They generally don't require water more often than once a week, when the plants are in active growth (normally spring to fall), and little or no water when they are semi-dormant to dormant (winter). The easiest way to determine if it's time to water them is by sticking your finger in the soil to the depth of your first knuckle, if the soil feels dry and room temperature it is probably time to water, if the soil feels moist and cool, then it's not yet time to water. When watering, water from the top and let the water drain into the saucer, after 30-40 minutes dump out any excess water left standing in the saucer, if all of the water was soaked up from the saucer, the plant may require a second watering. Leaving your cactus or succulents in a saucer of water will often lead to suffocation of the root system for lack of air, and will promote fungal and disease problems. Over time, you will become more familiar with how much and how often to water each plant. If at any time, the soil becomes so dry as to shrink away from the sides of the pot, you may need to water it thoroughly several times or soak the entire pot, in a container of water until the soil has become fully re-saturated. This could take up to 1-2 hours to complete but 30-45 minutes is probably more typical.

We grow many of our Succulent and Cacti in clay or other heavy pots, as many of them become large and somewhat top heavy with size. Not only that the terracotta pots actually breathe better often leading to healthier plants if they are sensitive to excessive moisture. Many people like to add a layer of sand or rock in the bottom of the pots for weight; it also makes a decorative mulch on top of the soil and aids in stabilizing a newly transplanted cactus while it's becoming established. When repotting cacti or succulents you'll want to use a fast draining cactus mix. To create your own soil mix, add 1 part sand or small gravel to 1-3 parts of a quality potting soil to create this mix. For slower growing plants, select a pot that is the next size up from its existing container (for example: if up-potting from a 6" pot select an 8" pot size). Lower growing plants will generally benefit from a shallow pot (less than 6" deep) over the standard depths, when selecting pots that are 6" in diameter or larger. Many of the trailing and vining types do very well in 6-10" hanging baskets and may trail as far as 6' (i.e. String of Hearts and Trailing Jade) or more in time.

Because of their slow growth rate and the wide variety of colors, textures, and forms of cacti and succulents, they are good choices to create long lasting mixed indoor container gardens for areas with high to medium light conditions. Even though most prefer the strong light of a south or west window, some of these low care plants will still grow and do well under low light conditions, specifically the Mother-In-Law Tongues and String of Hearts.

Cactus and succulents need minimal amounts of fertilizer. Over-fertilizing can cause such vigorous growth as to split the sides of some cacti, it may also burn the roots and stems causing stress and possibly leading to rot. Fertilize only when they are in active growth or immediately prior to its normal growing season. We generally apply about 1 tsp of a 3-4 month, slow release, non-burning, balanced fertilizer spread evenly over the soil's surface, to a 6" pot in spring and again in mid-summer. Do not pile large amounts of fertilizer next to the base of the plant, this can lead to stem and root burn and possibly stem rot.

This guide was created as a general guide to help you in understanding the basic needs and methods for growing most cacti, succulents, and other plants that do well under similar conditions and is not complete or accurate for all types of these plants. We hope this helps to get you growing. If you have more questions or are in need of further assistance, please feel free to contact us.



Parachute Flower  
*Ceropeltis sandersonii*



Night Blooming Cereus  
*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*

Thank You & Good Growing,  
The Crew at Almost Eden  
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