

Cactus and Succulent Society of Massachusetts

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Caring for Succulents

Most succulents require similar care. However, as this is an overview, keep in mind that there are some succulents whose care differs from that below.

Light

Succulents prefer bright light. The plant will tell you if it is getting the right amount of light. Too much light and the leaves may scorch and turn brown or white. This can happen when keeping them indoors and too close to the window glass. Too little light and the plant will start to stretch, and the leaves will become more spaced out, as it is trying to reach more light.

Temperature

Succulents are much more cold-tolerant than you might think. In the desert, there is often a marked contrast between night and day. Succulents thrive in colder nights, getting down as low as 40°F. However most of them don't like frost. Succulents ideally like daytime temperatures between 70°F and about 85°F and night time temperatures near 50°F.

Soil

Succulents should be potted in a fast-draining mixture. There are ones available designed for cacti and succulents, but a homemade mix of gravel, small rocks, and sand is great.

Water

If your plants live outside you probably won't need to ever water them. If you are experiencing extreme drought and the plants have stopped growing and are beginning to shed leaves then you will need to water them. Indoor potted succulents should be watered generously in the summer, allowing the potting mix to dry between watering. During the winter, when the plants go dormant, cut watering back to once or twice every other month. Overwatering causes plant rot which is the single most common cause of plant failure. Keep in mind the following with regards to overwatered plants:

- Overwatered plants are soft and discolored. The leaves may be yellow or white and lose their color. A plant in this condition may be beyond repair, but you can still remove it from its pot and inspect the roots. If they are brown and rotted, cut away dead roots and repot into drier potting media, or take a cutting and propagate the parent plant.
- Succulents prefer generous water during the growing season (spring and summer). An under-watered plant will first stop growing, then begin to shed leaves. Alternatively, the plant may develop brown spots on the leaves.
- An overwatered succulent might at first plump up and look healthy. However, the cause of death may have already set in, as the rot spreads upward from the root system. A succulent should never be allowed to sit in water.
- Succulents will lose leaves from the bottom as they grow which is normal. You only need to watch out for them losing leaves from the middle or the top.

Hopefully following these steps will give you happy, healthy succulents, some of which have incredible flowers. Happy Growing!