



Garden Club Newsletter

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THIS ISSUE

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Cacti versus Succulent

by Dave Rosenthal

If you know the difference between a cactus and a succulent, raise your hand. Aren't they just plants with spiky needles, you ask? Many people use the terms "cactus" and "succulent" interchangeably; this is incorrect as the two are different from each other. If you raised your hand, feel free to skip the rest of this article. However, read on as this month's newsletter is full of a lot of other great information!

The fact is that all cacti are succulents but not all succulents are cacti. What does that mean? Basically, "cactus" is a subset of "succulents." Cactus denotes a botanical family. Succulents do not belong to their own plant family, but they can be found in nearly 60 different plant families spread around the globe, including cousins Crassula, Haworthia, and Sedum. All of these are water-storing plants found in dry and arid

climates. Most varieties are native to Mexico and South Africa.

Cacti are identified by their needle-like spines and waxy stems. They have fleshy stems that store water and are capable of photosynthesis. Most cacti do not have leaves but that is not always the case. Succulents, on the other hand,



Areoles are small structures on the photosynthetic stems of cacti; often, spines are produced at the areole. The areole is usually interpreted as a rudimentary shoot, and the spines are reduced leaves borne on this shoot. Areoles can also contain numerous bristles, called glochids, at the bases of the spines.





hold water and nutrients in their fleshy leaves and can be identified from the arrangement and shape of their leaves.

A succulent is considered to be a cacti when it features areoles. An areole is a tiny bump on the plant's surface out of which grow leaves, spines, or hair. If it doesn't have any areoles, it is a succulent.

Both cacti and succulents blossom with flowers, but cacti blooms are brighter in color, larger, and have complex structures that are often pollinated by bees, butterflies, and bats. Succulents have blossoms that are small, simple in structure and are only pollinated by bees.

Of the two, only cactus plants can grow fruit. The most commonly known cactus fruits are dragon fruit and prickly pear.

Propagation, the process in which an element of the parent plant is used to grow a baby plant, is also different between cacti and succulents. Cacti propagate via seeds and offsets often called pups. Succulents are most often propagated by stem and leaf cuttings.

To recap:

Cacti generally have few to no leaves, they have areoles (modified buds from which the spines ex-trude), they store water in their stems, and they are almost all native to the New World.

Succulents store water in their foliage and most sport leaves or modified leaves that, while firm to the touch, have a swollen, juicy look to them. Succulents range from the tiny "living stone" (Lithops) to the giant Saguaro that grows up to 50-feet tall at maturity. Some succulents are edible, such as purslane (used in salads), and some are potable, such as the juice of the aloe vera plant.

Now that you know the essential differences between cacti and succulents, here are a few fun facts about them. Cacti and succulents are most often associated with warm/hot areas like the desert, but some types, such as Hens and Chicks and prickly pear, are quite cold-hardy. Hens and Chicks grow well in zones 3–11 and prickly pear is found in zones 4–10.

Benefits and Care of your Cacti:

1. Cacti look cool.
2. They are low maintenance and good even for folks without a green thumb.
3. They need to be watered during the blooming season.
4. Watering should be reduced or eliminated during their dormant period in the winter.
5. Use a cactus mix for your plant as it provides improved drainage, thus keeping the soil moisture free.
6. Fertilizing annually is recommended but don't overdo it.
7. Keep in full to partial sunlight for a few hours daily.



Care of Your Succulent:

1. They grow best in well-drained soil mix.
2. Terra cotta or clay pots are recommended as they provide good drainage and help prevent root rot.
3. They like full to partial sun but can sun burn if exposed to intense sunlight.
4. Water thoroughly during growing season but do not let any moisture sit in the soil.
5. Let the soil dry out completely before watering again.
6. The plant can die if overwatered or if kept in soggy, wet soil for too long.
7. They are best planted indoors if you live in a cold area that is subject to freezing.

Cacti and succulents are easy-care plants. They can make great starter plants, even for those who lack a "green thumb." Many species require only the most basic maintenance and look great in the home or garden. Simply pop them in a space with plenty of light and water them every now and then for a little touch of the exotic.

References:

www.thespruce.com -- <https://www.thespruce.com/search?q=succulents>
<https://www.thespruce.com/search?q=cactus>
Planet Desert, <https://planetdesert.com/blogs/news/difference-between-cactus-and-succulent>

Learn more about other plants mentioned in this article:

Crassula: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crassula>
Haworthia: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/haworthias-super-succulents-for-small-spaces/>
Sedum: <https://www.almanac.com/plant/sedum>
Lithops: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/living-stones-lithops/>



End of the Year Party!!



*Congratulations to
the winners of the
Seed Starting Challenge!!*

MaryRose Gangle, Peggy Davis
Jeanne Duss, Linda Henderson
and Roger Ziemer

A big **thank you** to the gals who
organized and judged the Seed Starting
Challenge then put together
those beautiful award baskets!

Judy Frank, Judy Harrison, Lumi Thomas
and Ruthette Kennedy

Featured Herb



Mint

by Jody Ryan

We are most familiar with the spearmint, peppermint, and catmint we commonly grow in our gardens, yet there are so many more varieties to this genus. The herb Mint, or *Mentha*, can be classified into 42 species, 15 hybrids, and hundreds of sub-species and cultivars. Hello, pineapple, orange, and chocolate mint!! Plants from the mint genus can be grown in quite diverse environments and are perennial in nature; once planted in an agreeable environment mint will come back year after year.

Mint has been used throughout the ages for its essential oils as well as medicinal and culinary purposes. Today, spearmint and peppermint are commercially grown for use in gum and candy, perfume and cosmetics, as well as health care products such as decongestants and toothpaste. The home gardener, too, will find many uses for mint. It attracts bees and other pollinators

to the garden, enabling your citrus and fruiting trees to flourish. It has been said honeycombs harvested near a mint field has a minty flavor. Mint is a natural mite deterrent that benefits the bees and their hives. Mint can be used as a holistic mosquito repellent by rubbing it on bare skin. It is a terrific companion plant to live among your cabbage and tomatoes as it discourages cabbage moths, whiteflies, spider mites, flea beetles and even aphids in the garden. Not all creatures enjoy the smell of mint; therefore, it acts to deter ants, mice, deer, spiders, and even cockroaches among other creepy crawlies.

In the Arizona desert we can successfully grow mint if protected from the intense summer sun by keeping its roots in a cool, moist soil with some degree of shade during the hottest part of the day. Mint should be planted in a pot or container. It is extremely aggressive and spreads easily. Do not allow it to go to seed. Deadhead flowers as soon as they appear.

Make sure you water your mint frequently, possibly daily during the hot summer months, allowing the top part of the soil to become dry to the touch before watering again. Water close to the roots instead of overhead to avoid sunburn on the plant leaves. Plucking leaves from the top of the plant will encourage the plant to bush out instead of up. Once every two years or so, divide the plant and transplant into separate plants or containers to keep mint from becoming rootbound.



Give mint a try. Here are a few ways to use mint from your garden:

Mediterranean-style Mint Lemonade (limonana)

Intense with flavor, frothy and extremely refreshing!

Ingredients:

- 2 cups crushed ice
- 4 cups drinking water
- 2 large lemons, washed, cut into small pieces with peel remaining on, and seeds removed
- Juice of one or two large lemons to equal approximately 12 Tbs. juice
- 1 handful of fresh mint leaves, stems removed (about 25-40 leaves)
- ½ to ¾ cup sugar, more or less to your liking (you can use cane sugar, honey, or stevia if you like)

Directions:

1. Add all the ingredients to a high-quality blender. Cover and push blend or liquefy until you achieve the desired drink consistency and the mixture turns bright green and frothy.
2. Taste and add more sugar or mint leaves as you like. Blend again.
3. Add more ice if you like your drinks slushy and blend again.
4. Pour the lemonade into a serving pitcher or strain if you prefer before serving.
5. Decorate with a fresh mint sprig and enjoy! (see photo)

If your blender is weaker you will want to cut the lemons into smaller pieces and also finely chop the mint before blending.



Recipe from [The Mediterranean Dish.com](http://TheMediterraneanDish.com)

Minted Beet Salad

Ingredients:

- 5 medium beets cooked until fork tender, peeled
- 2 Tbs. champagne vinegar or rice vinegar
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. coarsely ground pepper
- ¼ cup pitted kalamata olives, quartered (optional)
- 2 or more Tbs. thinly sliced fresh mint
- Crumbled goat cheese (optional)
- Drizzle of honey

Directions:

1. Cook beets until fork tender, peel and cut into ¼ to ½ slices.
2. In a bowl whisk vinegar, oil, salt and pepper until blended.
3. Add beets, olives, and half the mint. Toss to coat. Refrigerate, covered, until cold at least 1 hour. Top with remaining 1 Tbs. fresh mint.
4. Garnish with crumbled goat cheese and a drizzle of honey.

Recipe from TasteofHome.com

For those who do not like to slave away in the kitchen, you can still utilize your mint by making a delicious tzatziki sauce for your lamb-beef gyro slices purchased already cooked and found in the freezer section at Costco. Reheat the gyro lamb in a frying pan, warm your pita bread, found at the grocery store, and add a dollop of tzatziki to make the exotic tasting lamb/tzatziki pita pockets.

Tzatziki Sauce

Ingredients:

- ½ cup finely grated cucumber
- 1 cup thick whole milk Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, grated or finely minced
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped dill
- 1 tablespoon chopped mint

Directions:

1. Start by grating the cucumber. I use the largest holes on a box grater to give my final sauce texture and plenty of green flecks.
2. Next, squeeze the water out of the grated

cucumber. Place the cucumber on a paper towel and squeeze out the excess water. This step is essential for making a creamy tzatziki – if you skip it, the water from the cucumber will cause your sauce to separate. Squeeze the cucumber directly over the sink, or press it lightly between kitchen or paper towels.

3. Then, stir everything together! Mix the squeezed cucumber with the yogurt, lemon juice, garlic, olive oil, salt, and herbs, and chill until you're ready to use.
4. Serve with pita pockets and sliced cooked lamb from Costco.

Recipe from Love & Lemons.com

Free Local Plant Exchange

**14076 W Cambridge Ave.,
Goodyear, AZ 85395**

David Thomas's home is not in PebbleCreek... more toward the corners of N. Litchfield Rd. and W. Thomas Rd. in the neighborhood behind West Valley National Bank.

He maintains the Free Plant Stand on behalf of the West Valley Garden Club off of his private home's front porch...With the rules of **"Bring One, Take One."** Always identify the plant you leave behind with a label and don't forget to sign the register.

Stop by if you ever have something to share...you never know what you might walk away with.



Local Exploration!



A day trip to the
Desert Botanical Garden
at 1201 N. Galvin Parkway in
Phoenix is well worth the trip!!

**Do you have a
question or topic
you'd like more
information about?**

If your answer is yes, please
email the question or topic to
gardenclubofpc@gmail.com

We will do our best to respond
in one of our upcoming
newsletters!

No question is too trivial!!



Garden Club of PebbleCreek

Website: pcgardenclub.org | Email: gardenclubofpc@gmail.com