

Cacti & Other Succulents

GENERAL CARE

SOIL: The best soil for cacti and succulents is a loose, porous, well-draining mix, such as equal parts of peat moss, perlite or pumice, and sand.

LIGHT: All window exposures can be used – even a north-facing windowsill is all right for some crassulas and sedums – but east and south-facing windows provide the best location for growing healthy plants. Occasionally in summer, plants too close to the window glass may burn. A screen, cheesecloth, or a light curtain will provide adequate shade if you don't wish to move plants away from the window altogether.

TEMPERATURE: Average home temperatures – about 65 degrees during the day and 10-15 degrees cooler at night – are fine for most succulents including cacti. As long as indoor temperatures remain above 45 degrees, most plants exist comfortably. A stuffy, hot atmosphere can harm any plant. A room with clean, well-circulated air will promote the most health and vigor.

WATERING: The general rules for watering cacti are: Don't water on rainy or cloudy days, as it could encourage rotting. During the growing season, from March or April thru September or October, water whenever soil is thoroughly dry. In late fall and winter, when most cacti are in their rest period, water only once every 6 to 8 weeks, and never when the soil is already moist. Succulents other than cacti usually use more water than cacti all year round. Just be sure, once again, to not add water when the soil is already wet or moist, as this could promote rot. Cacti and succulents can be fertilized every 2 to 4 weeks in their growing season with a regular balanced houseplant fertilizer that is dissolved in water and applied as a regular watering. Be sure to not fertilize during the winter rest period. There are a few species that need watering much less often than others. These include the very hairy types, such as "old men" cacti and succulents like lithops (living stones), baby toes, and conophytums. You can tell that these last three succulents need a drink when they begin to show a little shriveling. Over-watering may cause them to split and crack or rot.

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