



SUCCULENTS, THE PERFECT LOW MAINTENANCE PLANT FOR HOUSE AND GARDEN

By Sue Becker, Bedford Extension Master Gardener

Succulent plants run the gamut from cacti to sedum, with many categories in between. They are a terrific choice for both indoor and outdoor gardens. With their often unusual and ornamental shapes and sizes, they add much to your landscape with little or no care.

Succulents are plants whose parts are thick and fleshy. Their stems enable them to collect and retain the moisture necessary for their survival, often for months at a time in hot, dry areas. Some can also tolerate high levels of dissolved minerals found in dry lake beds or the seacoast, which are often fatal to other plants. The spines and hairs on various cacti and succulents help trap the dew in the air while their waxy coatings prevent the release of moisture back into the atmosphere. Their roots are spread wide just below the soil in order to catch and keep whatever rain falls. Stonecrops, Hens and Chicks, and other various sedum varieties are great examples of succulents that can be grown in our local landscapes. Most are drought and deer resistant, can survive both heat and cold, and bring much interest to those rocky, hard to grow anything parts of our garden.

Planting succulents require soils and pots with good drainage. A mixture of 1/3 loam, 1/3 sand, and 1/3 peat moss is acceptable for most succulents. You can also purchase soil mixtures if you don't want to make your own. Clay or Hypertufa pots are great for growing these plants. Hypertufa, a lightweight stone material created to mimic the look of porous limestone or volcanic rock, is an excellent container for succulents because of its great drainage properties. Hypertufa can be made at home to create all kinds of containers or yard art (**See below for info on Free Hands-On Hypertufa Workshops**). Choose your container to fit your plants. Over potting (planting your plant in a too large of a pot) results in wetter soils which can result in disease and rot.

Intermittent watering will suffice for these plants. Allow the top 1" of soil to dry out before watering again. Check below the surface with your finger to make sure it is completely dried out. Light, humidity, and fertilizer requirements are often individual to the plant. Believe it or not, some cacti like it in the shade. A normal house plant liquid

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fertilizer can be added when you water. For more information on growing your favorite succulent, check out the University of Arizona's websites including the Boyce Thompson Arboretum.

CREATE YOUR OWN HYPERTUFA PLANTER!

If you are interested in learning to make hypertufa planters or yard art, you can attend a **FREE** seminar sponsored by the Bedford Public Library System and Bedford Extension Master Gardeners. At these hands on workshops you will **make your own hypertufa planter and get instructions for making other types of hypertufa yard art.**

To learn more about making Hypertufa planters and other projects such as sandcasting and to make your own Hypertufa planter, sign up to attend a free seminar at one of the following local libraries:

Forest Library, Saturday, May 7 at 10:30 am (540 425-7002)

Stewartsville Library, Saturday, May 14, at 11:00 am (540) 425-7008)

Bedford Main Library, Saturday, May 28 at 11:00 am (540 586-8911)

Moneta/SML Library, Saturday, June 4 at 11 a.m. (540 425-7004)

These seminars are cosponsored by Bedford Extension Master Gardeners and the Bedford Library System. **While there is no fee for attendance, pre-registration is required.** Contact the library to register.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Scott Baker of the Bedford Extension Office at (540)586-7675 [TDD: (800)828-1120] during business hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.