



Cacti and Succulents

Information provided by Little Red Nursery
4006 34th Street ~ Lubbock TX 79410
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Need a plant with lots of character that likes low humidity, warm temperatures, lots of light and not much attention? Look no further: Cacti and succulents thrive in that environment. There is such a wide variety of sizes and shapes of cactus and succulent plants that you can find one to fit almost every conceivable space.

Almost always teamed together, cacti and succulents have lots in common, but several important distinctions. To select a healthy plant, look for good color, signs of recent growth, and make sure it is firmly rooted.

What is the difference between a cactus and a succulent?

succulent? All Cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti. The word succulent simply means juicy and fleshy. All succulents have the ability to store water in their flesh. Cacti are succulents with spine cushions called areoles that can bear spines and/or flowers; and cacti do not have branches or leaves. Succulents do not have areoles and can have branches and leaves. However, there are enough exceptions to that rule that it really isn't very useful. Holiday cacti are true cacti and they don't have any thorns. And agaves - a type of succulent - have wicked spines.



Are there lots of types of cacti? Cacti all belong to one family, Cactaceae. There are hundreds of varieties of almost every imaginable shape and size. With the exception of few varieties that are protected and a few that get too large, most cacti make great indoor plants. Almost all cacti originated in the Americas, and most of them in desert regions. Some varieties of cacti are jungle plants, such as the Holiday cactus and orchid cactus.

Do all cacti have the same basic growing requirements? All cacti that come from hot, dry areas can be treated alike. They need 5-6 hours of direct sunlight year-round, average indoor temperatures and low humidity. They should be thoroughly watered once every 2-3 weeks.

What type of soil should I use with cacti? Cacti like well-drained soil. Specially formulated mixes of sand and potting soil like Fertilome Cactus Mix.

How should I fertilize cacti? Avoid any fertilizer in winter. During the rest of the season, give them cacti and succulent fertilizer available at Little Red Nursery.



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Are there many types of succulents? Unlike cacti, which all belong to one family, there are 12 different families of succulents. Some families have several succulent genera and many of those have several species. In other words, there are lots of different succulents; many of which are suitable indoor plants.

Do succulents all have the same basic requirements? There are some basic similarities, but there are so many distinctly different plants in this category that it is difficult to make useful generalizations. By their nature, succulents are more drought-tolerant than the average plant and need at least 4 or 5 hours of bright light each day. They tend to be more tolerant of low humidity. Succulents prefer a well-draining potting soil such as Fertillome Cacti and Succulent Mix like we use here at the nursery.

How do I approach repotting cacti and succulents? Other than the thorns and bristles, you can handle repotting as you do with any other plant. To avoid the thorns, either work with heavy leather gloves, handle the plants with tongs or wrap the plant with several layers of newspaper to protect your hands.

How can cacti and succulents be propagated? In nature, they rely primarily on seeds, but that is a long, slow process for the home gardener. Propagation through cuttings is easy and reliable for these plants. Dip the raw end of the cuttings into a rooting hormone with fungicide and let them dry for several days to form a callous. Next, stick the cutting just deep enough in dry soil to keep it upright but do not water. After a few weeks, roots will begin to form and you can water. If you water before you have roots, the cutting may rot. Some succulents will grow from seeds. There are a few varieties of cactus that need to be propagated by grafting.

Are there any insect or disease problems with cacti and succulents? When these plants are overwatered or planted in soil that is not drained well, they are prone to rot at the base. Occasionally they will have problems with mealy bugs or white flies. Treat them carefully with the mildest insecticides available, since many of them are sensitive to chemicals. Healthy plants are much more resistant to problems. If pests do strike, we recommend Horticultural Oil or Neem Oil.

