

# Cacti & Succulents

**C**acti and succulents have a widely varied appearance, but all have one thing in common; they've evolved into drought-resistant forms capable of surviving areas with intermittent or uncertain rainfall. Most thrive in rocky or sandy locations, some even in trees. They've developed enlarged roots, stems or leaves and can store water for extended periods, sometimes years. They're seldom found in places with standing water. They *much* prefer well-drained sites where soil is coarse and gritty. Most succulents come from warm- to hot-climate countries with a year-round abundance of sun.

Although cactus and succulents are more tolerant of neglect than most plants and have a large capacity of survival under poor conditions, they will repay you ten-fold if you pay attention to a few basic points:

**LIGHT:** Except for woodland plants such as Christmas Cactus or Orchid Cactus, most succulents and cacti require and like as much light as possible. They'll be more robust, have better color and flower more freely when exposed to full sun. They can tolerate less light but will be paler green and less inclined to flower much. (If growing your plants indoors, succulents will tolerate the lower light levels better than cacti.)

**TEMPERATURE:** During the growing season, temperature and light should be considered together. Plants requiring some shade prefer lower temps. In winter, most succulents fair well with a nighttime low of 40 degrees F with daytime temps in the 60's.

Many, particularly those from mountainous regions, can withstand much greater cold (even freezing) if kept fairly dry. They may even flower more as a result. This group can be planted outside as permanent landscape features as long as they have good drainage. On the other end of the scale are low desert and coastal area plants, such as iceplants and melon cactus, which prefer a winter minimum of about 60 degrees F. These types need protection from frost and freezing temperatures.

**SOIL:** Whether in containers or in the ground, soil should *always* be well-draining. Many mixtures work, including soil-free mixes as long as there is sufficient coarse material such as grit, lava rock or perlite present to enable excess water to drain away quickly. We recommend EB Stone Cactus Mix. Repot annually for young plants, less often for slow-growing and larger plants. Spring/fall is best for replanting.

**WATERING:** Cacti and succulents need ample water during growing season (late spring to fall). This varies from daily (if in full sun) to once or twice a week for plants in larger containers and partial shade or in the ground. Leafy kinds need more water than the swollen-stem kinds. In winter, limit water to an amount sufficient to prevent shriveling. Thin-leaf succulents and Epiphyllums are exceptions and should be kept moist year-round.

**FEEDING:** A once- or twice-annual application of a slow-release food such as Osmocote, or monthly with a weak solution of liquid fertilizer such as GrowMore Cactus Juice or Schultz Cactus food.

*See other side for caring for Christmas and Easter cactus*



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# Care of Christmas and Easter Cactus

## **Christmas Cactus (Schlumbergera):**

### **November - January**

Flowering period: Water thoroughly when soil begins to dry out.

### **February- April**

Resting period; water infrequently and keep cool.

### **Late April - May**

Water thoroughly when soil begins to dry out. Feed every 7 to 10 days with a diluted liquid fertilizer such as Maxsea 16-16-16.

### **June - August**

Place plant outdoors in a protected area with bright, dappled light; protect from snails and slugs. Continue feeding schedule.

### **Late September - November**

Pre-flowering period; keep soil on the dry side and provide cool night temperatures (50-55) and provide 12-15 hours of darkness per day until buds form.

When buds have formed, increase water and to increase temperature, bring the plant back indoors.

## **Easter Cactus (Rhipsalidopsis):**

### **September - January**

Resting period; soil should be moist but not soggy. Plants should be kept indoors.

### **February - March**

Pre-flowering period; keep soil on the dry side and provide cool night temperatures (50-55) until buds have formed. When buds have formed, increase water.

### **Late March - Early June**

Flowering period; water thoroughly as soil dries.

### **June - August**

Place plant outdoors in a protected area with indirect or dappled light; protect from snails and slugs. Feed every 7-10 days with a diluted liquid fertilizer such as Maxsea 16-16-16.