

# Growing Succulents in Containers

UCCE SM/SF Counties Master Gardeners  
2012 Educational Garden Tour



## What you need for your succulent container garden:

- Succulent plants with like-light requirements
- Plastic window screening, paper towel, coffee filter or a piece of newspaper
- Cactus or succulent potting soil (or you can make your own by mixing potting soil with vermiculite, perlite or pumice)
- Container with good drainage
- Stones, gravel, sea glass or marbles for top-dressing
- Sunlight/Cool Sun/Light Shade

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agave attenuata, Fox Tail Agave</b> Large, light green leaves with pointed ends</li> <li>• <b>Aeonium 'Kiwi', Kiwi Aeonium</b> Light yellow &amp; green, tinged with pink rosettes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Echeveria hybrid</b> Grey rosettes</li> <li>• <b>Portulacaria afra 'Gold Form', Golden Elephant Bush</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Aeonium 'Kiwi' (crested form)</b></li> <li>• <b>Crassula, Jade Plant</b></li> <li>• <b>Portulacaria afra 'Gold Form'</b></li> <li>• <b>Senecio sp.</b> Compact with short grey fingers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Echeveria 'Blue Curls'</b> Pink and blue leaves</li> <li>• <b>Sedum 'Little Missy'</b> Tiny grey green rosettes</li> </ul>

## ***Planting Your Succulent Garden:***

When choosing a container for succulent plants, think about keeping it small scale and providing good drainage. Succulents have shallow root systems and prefer shallow pots. Make sure there is at least one drainage hole at the bottom of the container.

Cut a piece of plastic window screening large enough to cover the perimeter and beyond your pot's drainage hole/holes. This will keep your potting soil in and let the water out. If you don't have window screening, use a paper towel or coffee filter to cover the hole.

Add enough soil to the bottom of your pot so that the top of your succulent plants will sit below the rim of your pot. If there is enough room, try to leave one half to an inch of space between the top of the soil and the rim of your pot. This makes it easier to water without soil and water overflowing the sides of your container.

Figure out your plant layout by arranging them in your container while they are still in their nursery pots. You will want to protect their fragile root systems while moving them around.

Carefully remove your succulent plants from their pots. When doing this, avoid grabbing the plant and pulling. Gently thread your fingers through the plant and turn it on its side or tap the container on the sides and bottom until your plant slides out. Your fingers may get in the way while working in the tight spaces of your arrangement. Try using a chop stick or knitting needle to separate plants and hold them in place.

After plants are arranged and set in the container, take small amounts of potting soil and pack gently around and in between your plants. As you do this, be careful to keep the soil at the same level on top of the plant as it was in the nursery pot. You don't want the new soil to touch the crown (the point where the root ball meets the stem). Make certain that you have filled in all the holes and spaces between the plants, and between the plants and the sides of the container. The roots will dry out too easily when you leave air pockets. Using a soft brush, gently sweep excess soil off where it sticks inside the nooks and crannies of the leaves.

To give your arrangement a finished look, choose a top-dressing to cover the soil. Top-dressing will add an aesthetic, finished look and will help to highlight the plants. You can use a variety of materials for top-dressing, as long as it's porous and won't mix with your potting soil. Gravel, sea glass, marbles, or small river rocks are good choices. Choose a contrasting color or go neutral, depending on the look you want to achieve.

## ***Care for your succulent container garden:***

Spring/Summer is growing season; keep the soil moist (like a wrung out sponge) by watering just long enough that the water drains out of the bottom of the container. Allow the soil get a little dry in between waterings.

Fall/Winter is when plants are dormant; normal winter rain is enough water for the succulents you see in containers in this garden; the key to surviving winter is good drainage.

Fertilize once a month during the growing season with a liquid houseplant fertilizer, diluted to ¼ strength recommended on the label.

Know the light requirements of your succulents and group like-plants together. Some succulents will take full sun, some require cool sun or light shade.