





LIVING SCULPTURES

• Creative Container Ideas with Succulents •



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The popularity of hardy and non-hardy succulents continues to endure with gardeners of all ages. Succulents are easy to care for and offer exotic, colourful and intriguing forms that can be used on their own or in creative and beautiful combinations. Their clean lines and sculptural shapes suit modern living and design styles and they can be used in small spaces and on patios or balconies where gardening can only be done in containers.

For downsizing baby boomers, succulents present intriguing ways to continue gardening in smaller spaces while offering younger generations – who might not even think of themselves as gardeners – an early, non-edible foray into gardening on their balconies and in their rented apartments. If edibles are the catalyst into gardening for the millennial generation, then succulents might be the exciting group of plants that get young people hooked as lifelong gardeners. For all gardeners succulents are a group of exciting flexible plants that can be used in any number of planting applications from conventional pots and bowls to living walls, wreaths, bird cages, furniture and any manner of found objects.

The most useful succulents for creative containers are the hardy hen and chicks (*sempervivum*, Zones 3-8*), stonecrops (*sedum*, Zones 2-9*) and ice plants (*delosperma*, Zones 4-8*), and the non-hardy *echeveria* (Zones

8-11*), century plants (agave, Zones 6-11*) and *aeonium* (Zones 9-11).

Caring for Succulents

Succulents are native to dry habitats around the world. Though we think of them as dry desert plants, with ample water they will grow luxuriantly through the growing season in full sun. In winter the hardy genera should be planted in thin soil so that winter rain and snow drain freely through the planting medium. Non-hardy genera should be brought inside to a bright window in a cool room and kept dry with only light monthly or bimonthly watering. In containers succulents should be provided with a balanced slow release fertilizer or watered with a liquid fertilizer once a week during the growing season.

Designing with Succulents

Colour, texture and form are the most important characteristics to consider in

succulent design. Succulents offer a dazzling range of foliage colours including green, blue, gold, orange, brown, burgundy, purple, white and variegated. Foliage can be thin and narrow or fat and bulbous. Their forms frequently offer variations on the rosette, though the trailing stems of stonecrops and ice plants are also valuable.

Conventional containers such as clay and ceramic pots, saucers and shallow bowls remain the most popular and easiest planting locations for succulents. Here you can practice the art of succulent design to maximum effect before graduating to more advanced containers.

The use of succulents is limited only by your own imagination. The following two pages offer some ideas to get you started.

*Exact zone hardiness is dependent on the species and cultivar.



LIVING WALLS & WREATHS

Going vertical is easy with succulents using living wall panels, shadowboxes and wreath frames. Rosetted succulents such as echeveria and sempervivum are best for “scaling the walls” of patios, fences and gates. If you use trailing succulents, plant them on the lower portion of your hanging masterpiece, otherwise, they will trail down over top of the other succulents.

BIRD CAGES

If your budgie has flown the coop, don't despair! Line the bottom and sides of your bird cage with dried moss, fill it with potting mix, cover with more moss and plant it up with rosetted and trailing succulents. Both of these forms can be planted between the cage bars or be allowed to grow through them as if trying to escape their confines. Your succulents will be much happier in their cage than a bird could ever be.



FOUND OBJECTS

Anything that can hold a little potting mix can be planted up with succulents. As long as you provide drainage and watch your watering, objects such as cups, bowls, vases, mugs, cocktail glasses, baskets and other wicker objects, suitcases, trunks and boxes can all be festooned with succulent living sculptures and become fabulous art installations in your garden. Once you start imagining the possibilities, you'll realize there isn't enough time in the day to plant up all your ideas! Have fun and send in pictures of your works of art.





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PURSES, PUMPS & BOOTS

Haute couture gardening has never been more stylish than planting up moss-covered purses, pumps and boots with succulents. These unique containers can be used for centrepieces or special displays in the garden or on the patio. You can even "bejewel" these garden accessories by poking holes in the sides and inserting a glimmering hen and chick or echeveria.



FURNITURE

All you need are some succulents and a garage sale to begin a revolution in upholstery. Old furniture such as chairs, tables, love seats and even beds could all be planted up. Remove the cushions, padding and fabric and replace them with chicken wire, landscape fabric, potting mix and dried moss to create the planting base. Then plant up with your favourite succulents. Black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens'), woolly thyme (*Thymus pseudolanuginosus*) and *Carex* 'Evergold' make great succulent companions. There's just one thing to remember: don't sit on the furniture!☺



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