

## Succulents in the Garden



Succulents add wonderful texture to the garden with their great architectural shapes and amazing colors. Their thick fleshy foliage make them drought tolerant and many thrive with neglect and are useful plants in a variety of low water, sunny gardens. Surprisingly, many succulents also do well in partial shade. Their main requirement is that they be planted in a loose medium containing quite a bit of sand or gravel to allow for good drainage. Succulents can be integrated very effectively into a perennial garden as demonstrated at the front of the Master Gardener demonstration garden at the Sonoma County Fair, but they also make a dynamic impact when massed together in a vertical garden as was done on the back wall of the same garden. They are naturals to mix with dryland perennials in a low water use garden to add texture and interest. But they also work well massed together and are particularly effective in a vertical garden where their incredibly interesting shapes can be presented. In fact, some artists have used succulents to create living wall art in both residential and commercial spaces. With their exquisite foliage, beautiful flowers and interesting forms, they provide year round interest wherever they are used.

Another dramatic use of succulents is as a dish garden, using a shallow bowl; terra cotta is very effective. Mixing plants with interesting leaf forms such as sempervivum, echeveria and aloe with the textural interest of the many different sedums will create a small garden that looks wonderful on a table or, if in a large planter, creates a centerpiece on a patio. Be sure to use a well draining potting mix made especially for cacti and succulents or mix your own with equal parts of sand and potting soil. Do not add any fertilizers as these plants prefer a lean soil.

For information on how to build a succulent wall such as the one at the Master Gardener demonstration garden, the following websites may be helpful.

[http://www.lowescreativeideas.com/idea-library/projects/Trellis\\_Moss\\_Garden\\_0409.aspx](http://www.lowescreativeideas.com/idea-library/projects/Trellis_Moss_Garden_0409.aspx)

[http://www.gardeningtipsideas.com/2008/07/starting\\_a\\_diy\\_vertical\\_garden.html](http://www.gardeningtipsideas.com/2008/07/starting_a_diy_vertical_garden.html)

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4900438\\_build-vertical-wall-planter.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4900438_build-vertical-wall-planter.html)

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5131172\\_build-vertical-garden-living-wall.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5131172_build-vertical-garden-living-wall.html)

Remember that, even though most succulents are extremely drought tolerant, they will require some water, so be sure to add some drip irrigation along the top and run it long enough for the water to percolate through the entire garden. Of course, depending on how big your vertical garden is, you may find it easier to water it by hand.