

Succulent Plants
at
Suncrest Nurseries, Inc.



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Succulents at Suncrest Nurseries Inc.

Though we have maintained a fair selection of them for many years, succulents have only recently been given systematic attention at Suncrest Nurseries. There are at least a couple of good reasons for this neglect. There is a well-established market for succulents as novelty plants, usually sold in small pots or combined in community planters. Even the growers supplying this market tend to be quite specialized, offering a wide selection of mostly smaller-growing succulents and little else. And many have been brought to cultivation from arid regions of the tropics and subtropics. This creates two problems for both the nursery grower and the ultimate consumer: Giving them adequate protection against winter cold, a problem even in some areas near the California coast; and avoiding rotting roots and even stems in a rainy winter. With these concerns in mind, we have chosen carefully, for the most part avoiding plants of the true deserts and trying out just the hardiest of some subtropical genera, like the aloes of South Africa. This has left a surprisingly large group to work with.

Features of the Group

Succulent plants represent more a general strategy than a coherent plant group. They occur in many plant families and in widely scattered locations and climates. They can be anything from the occasional annual--*Parvisedum*, for example--to (usually small) trees. What unites them is their structures--most often swollen leaves or stems--for storing water, "succulent" literally means "full of juice". This thickening is often accompanied by a waxy cuticle that retards water loss and often gives the plants a lacquered appearance. Other elements may include a dusting of waxy powder that reflects light and cools leaf surfaces, and hairs or spines (especially obvious in the cacti) that accomplish the same end, as well as providing some measure of physical defense. Altogether these features give the plants a distinctive, sometimes bizarre appearance.

Particular genera and species offer additional features of interest to the gardener. Plants with thickened stems and reduced leaves may form intricate structures like bits of driftwood or coral. Some, like various aloes, dudleyas and sempervivums, arrange their leaves in neat rosettes or hummocks. The leaves may be highly colored, sometimes throughout the year but often in response to cooler weather. Flowers may be presented in elegant sprays or candle-like spikes. And their color may have an almost neon-like brilliance.

Uses and Culture

On the whole, succulent plants have rather specific roles to play in the landscape. Some of the shrubby types are simply too bold to be visually compatible with more common leafy shrubs. However, the same plants may be beautiful standing alone, or displayed as the centerpiece of a group of smaller and more modest plants. Collections of succulents, especially when combined with rockery, may suggest a desert or mountain setting. Some matting succulents, for example several of California's native sedums, are of sufficient scale to make attractive ground covers. Many smaller or more compact plants, like the sempervivums, are beautiful rock garden subjects. Finally, of course, there are the decorative pots, tubs and troughs for which succulents have been widely used for many years.

Regarding culture, we have already chosen a relatively easy path for both ourselves and the gardener by focusing on hardier and more garden-tolerant species. We are happy to leave the challenges of desert plants to someone else. The plants you will find described below are mostly sun-loving perennials and shrubs, though a few of the sedums perform notably well in part shade. Most appreciate, and some absolutely require, well-drained soil. However, other soil features, like pH and fertility tend to be

negotiable. Only a few of the large winter-deciduous sedums, like *S. spectabile* and *S. telephium*, need regular watering, though the actual extent of drought tolerance varies considerably, as described below. Some of these plants are quite at home in blazing heat, while others appreciate, or even require, more moderate temperatures. Cold hardiness is perhaps the most variable feature of all among the species and hybrids we grow. At the lower extreme are the sempervivums and some sedums, capable of enduring temperatures around 0°F. At the higher are a few aloes, hardy to just under 20°F (many aloes we *don't* grow are far more tender).

Selections Currently Grown at Suncrest Nurseries

AGAVE. Maguey. The Americas. The agaves are dramatic features of the landscape wherever they are found, from ocean bluffs to the open desert. They form distinct rosettes of large, often broadly sword-shaped leaves, often tipped with vicious (though only if you run into one) spines and lined by stout marginal teeth. The rosettes may grow in size for many years, erupt in a large spike or candelabrum of flowers, set vast quantities of seeds, then die. Those that produce offsets before flowering form permanent colonies; others simply die, having insured the next generation. The flower stems are often spectacular features in their own right, with a stout central axis and side branches carrying large clusters of flared, tubular flowers. The flowers are usually painted in shades of yellow—sometimes brilliant yellow—and green.

The agaves are bold features in any garden—sometimes a little too bold for the sites they are given. They are wonderful in large tubs and on large mounds and banks. They delight in full sun, well-drained soil and only occasional watering once they are established, though several are surprisingly tolerant of ordinary garden conditions. Also surprising is their hardiness, particularly in the species of our own Southwest.

parryi. Traditionally used as a source of mescal, Parry's agave is native to a wide range of elevations in the Southwest United States and Mexico. It is one of the cold hardiest of the agaves. Rosettes of glaucous grey leaves reach up to 2' tall, and leaves are well armored with a shiny brown spine at the tip as well as small spines on the margins. Robust flower stems, when they appear, can reach 11-20 feet tall and carry umbels of yellow flowers. Rosettes can be solitary or produce offsets. Hardy to 0°F. or less.

vilmoriniana. Octopus agave perches on the rocky sides of deep canyons in its native Mexico, filling much the same niche as many of our California dudleyas, but on a much larger scale. Its light bluish green rosettes are generally solitary and can reach 3' in height and 5' in width. The terminal spine on the long, twisted leaves is relatively soft and unthreatening. Flower stems to 15' carry white to yellow flowers set close to the stem; flower stems also carry young plantlets (bulbils) ready to colonize new spaces. Best in sun or part shade, this plant is also a good container subject. Hardiness below 25°F. is uncertain.

ALOE. South Africa to Yemen and Madagascar. This is a huge genus of dramatic trees, shrubs and more or less herbaceous perennials of the lily family (or its own family, in the eyes of some botanists). They are much better known and grown in southern California than here. Whatever their form overall, they have distinctive crowns of tapered, usually rather narrow, succulent leaves with mostly toothed margins. From the axils of the leaves rise branched or simple stalks bearing clusters of tubular, six-parted and often highly colored flowers. Flower colors range from deep red through orange and pink to bright or pale yellow. The flowers are a delight to hummingbirds.

These are bold garden plants whose uses will depend largely on their size, both vertical and horizontal. Some are specimen trees and shrubs, others are effective border plants, and still others are small- to large-scale ground covers. Many are also excellent long-term container specimens. Most delight in a sunny spot, though they will tolerate light shade, and can be grown in most reasonably well drained soils. Most

are drought-tolerant, though their tolerance of ordinary garden watering varies widely. Tenderness to cold is their main limiting factor in northern and central California; we are cautiously trying some of the hardier sorts and hope to have a few more soon.

ciliaris. This shrubby aloe can clamber up to 10' as it seeks good light. Dark green succulent leaves have white teeth on the margins; leafy stems develop considerable weight, making strong support necessary. It is native to the summer-rainfall area of the eastern Cape of South Africa, where it is found weaving its way through and over thickets. Bright orange 1" flowers on foot long spikes appear in spring near the branch tips. Probably hardy to the upper 20s.

cooperi. Clusters of broad, orange bell flowers with narrower green tips droop from 18" stems in mid-summer on this grassland aloe from the summer-rainfall eastern region of South Africa. It only needs moderate water in the garden and can take considerable cold, as it can be completely deciduous in winter. Sun, well drained soil, probably hardy to 10°F.

'**Johnson's Hybrid**'. This is an unusual perennial, making broad, dense mats with short stems and tapered bright green 6-8" leaves. It flowers almost continuously, producing a succession of 8-12" stems tipped by thick clusters of 3/4" blossoms. The flowers have bright orange tubes and pale yellow inner petals, marked with green at the tips. This is an unusual and colorful ground cover for mild areas. We have yet to probe its ultimate hardiness, though it has thus far taken below 20°F. with only minor damage.

striatula. This was presented to us as one of the "hardy" aloes. It is a rather widely branched shrub, growing about 6' high, with attractive greyish bark. It has curved, narrow bright green leaves with tiny whitish teeth. In summer it displays dense clusters of 1" flowers, elevated above the foliage on 1' stems. Flower color is generally reddish orange, but lemon yellow in this unnamed selection. It has been unaffected here by temperatures around 20°F. and is reputed to be hardy to somewhere in the 'teens.

BULBINE frutescens. South Africa. This is an odd, semishrubby perennial of the lily family, eventually making broad carpets with its branched, prostrate trunks. Individual shoots are spreading to nearly erect, and crowded with nearly cylindrical, succulent, bright green leaves, each 4-6" long. Flowering stems are produced at nearly any time of year at the shoot tips, each carrying dozens of starry blossoms in lengthy succession. The individual flowers are about 1/2" across, orange or yellow to white in color. We offer an unnamed selection with lemon yellow flowers and '**Hallmark**', whose bright orange flowers have contrasting gold centers. These are interesting subjects for either containers or the open garden, where they are attractive in borders and useful as small-scale ground covers. They thrive in a sunny spot with reasonably well drained soil and moderate to occasional watering. Hardy to 20°F. or less, though the leaves are scorched by sudden hard frosts.

COTYLEDON orbiculata variety *oblonga*. Sturdy, stocky shrubs are well-branched; individual leaves are boat shaped in cross section and pale grey-green. They can reach 7" or more in length. Spring bell-like flowers are held in hanging clusters on 12" stems. Best in sun to part shade, with well drained soil and occasional summer water. Said to be hardy to 20-25°F.

DELOSPERMA. "Iceplant" holds a significant, somewhat unsavory, place in the California landscape plant palette but the South African genus of hardy iceplants, *Delosperma* is very different in nature than the familiar, thuggish coastal invader. Many delospermas are found at higher elevations in the Drakensberg mountains of South Africa and Lesotho. Low temperatures are no trouble to them, and they thrive in cold climates. Generally tidy plants with small green to grey succulent leaves, most species form low mats, with no invasive notions. Small starry flowers appear over a six week period in summer.

Delosperma congestum is particularly tight in habit, with dense, bright green leaves under the vivid

yellow flowers. *D. sutherlandii* and *D. lavisiae* form low, looser mats, with bright greyish green leaves. Flowers on *D. lavisiae* are bright magenta, while those of *D. sutherlandii* are vivid red violet. These are great plants for rock gardens, edging and containers. Full sun is best; good drainage, lean soil and moderate to occasional watering. Hardy to 0°F. or below.

DUDLEYA. Live-forever. Odd succulents inhabiting rocks, cliffs and occasionally dunes in California and parts of the Southwest. They have single or branching, ground-hugging rosettes, sometimes elevated in older plants on short trunks. The leaves are large (to 6" or more), flat to cylindrical and often covered by white, waxy powder. Small bell shaped flowers, painted cream or yellow to red, are carried in open clusters above the foliage in spring and summer. Sun, well drained soil, only occasional summer watering when established. Hardiness varies from below 10° to 25°F.

brittonii. A robust species, native to Baja California. It forms dense crowns of tapered leaves up to nearly 1' long, completely covered with white, waxy powder. The flowering stems are 1-3' tall and bear clusters of yellow blossoms in summer. A spectacular container plant. 20-25°F.

caespitosa. As it is seen on our central and southern coast, this is a highly variable species which hybridizes and intergrades with several others. Plants of the current material can make just a few or many shoots from a narrow base. Each consists of a tight rosette of grey-green, rather narrow leaves up to 8" long. The flowering stems are branched and 1-2' high, with many yellow flowers. Probably 15°F.

cymosa. This plant is a common sight on cliffs and rocky hillsides in northern California. It has compact rosettes with relatively broad, nearly flat leaves. Bright yellow to scarlet flowers are carried in open sprays on 4-8" stalks in late spring and summer. Hardy to 10°F. or less.

hassei. A native of Santa Catalina Island, with short, closely branched trunks and densely clustered, narrow leaves. The leaves are covered with whitish powder. Pale yellow to white flowers are carried on 8-12" stems. We offer both seedling material and a cultivar at least similar to 'Anacapa Pink', with striking pink flower stems. This species is attractive as a small scale ground cover. 20°F. or less.

lanceolata. This inhabitant of rocky slopes of central and southern California has narrow, fleshy leaves that typically are quite grey in color. Flower stems are erect with the curved spikes carrying quite bright yellow flowers. Probably hardy to 15°F. or less.

pulverulenta. A southern California native with spectacular large rosettes. The leaves measure individually up to 10" long and are quite broad. They are also densely covered with white powder. Openly branched stems over 1' tall bear many attractive red flowers. This is a fine plant for walls and rockery, where it can grow facing out, with water draining away from the crowns; otherwise, it needs some protection from winter rains. 20°F. or less.

ECHEVERIA 'Imbricata'. Thought to be a hybrid made in the nineteenth century, this classic succulent makes broad rosettes to 8" across. Paddle-shaped, slightly wavy leaves are over 2" across and blue-grey in color with a coral-rose edge. Plants expand over time, making numerous offsets and forming a dense, somewhat undulating colony. Coral flower stems arch over the leaves in spring and carry red and yellow flowers. Hardy to at least 25°F. and best in well drained soil with occasional to little water.

GRAPTOPETALUM paraguayense. Mexico. Ghost plant. An odd succulent perennial of the crassula family. It is sprawling in habit though well-branched. The leaves are up to 2" long, quite thick and pointed at the tips. They emerge with a distinct rosy cast, later becoming grey-green with bronze undertones. In early spring it displays waxy pale yellow 3/4" blossoms, spotted with red. This is an interesting plant for rock gardens, succulent menageries and containers. Sun or light shade, well drained soil, moderate to occasional watering. Hardy to around 20°F.

LEWISIA. Western U.S. and Canada. These are beautiful though sometimes temperamental native succulents for rock garden and pot culture. They produce crowns of spatula shaped to cylindrical leaves and carry umbrella-like flower clusters above the foliage in spring and early summer (sometimes also in fall, in coastal climates). The several to many-petalled blossoms range in color from white through pink, yellow and salmon shades to reddish purple. Sun or light shade near the coast, light shade inland, perfectly drained soil dressed with gravel around the crowns of older plants, and watering only when dry. Hardy to 0°F. or below.

columbiana ssp. rupicola. A Northwestern native making tight, low clumps with narrow, dark green leaves, about 2" long. The flowers are small, borne many to each airy spray, and colored rose-purple. One of the easier of the lewisias to grow.

cotyledon. This highly variable species is one of the great treasures encountered in the natural rock gardens of the mountains of northern California. It forms flat rosettes of roughly strap shaped leaves 2-6" long. The flowers are held well above the rosette, many to a spray, and can measure individually 1" or more across. The typical form has smooth-edged leaves and candy-striped blossoms, each petal showing a pink to red central band on a lighter background.

'**Dark Cloud**', '**Pink Cloud**' and '**White Cloud**' are our own floriferous seedling strains, the result of backcrossing one of the reddest 'Sunset Strain' selections with a large pink *cotyledon howellii*. Like 'Sunset Strain', they bloom at nearly any time of year in a coastal climate. Most plants have 6-10" stems, each bearing many large blossoms. Those of 'Dark Cloud' are purplish red, those of 'Pink Cloud' are bright pink, and you can probably guess the color for 'White Cloud'.

SEDUM. Cold and temperate regions, mostly Northern Hemisphere. A huge group, mostly of herbaceous perennials, highly variable in several respects. Many of these plants are quite showy, though the flowers are often secondary to the foliage as ornamental features. Both stems and leaves are typically succulent. Flowers are small, star shaped, and borne in head-like to spoke-like clusters. Depending on size and habit, they can be used for ground cover, borders, planter boxes and other containers, or the rock garden. Most thrive in sun or light shade, most soils, with moderate to occasional watering when established. The following are hardy to 10°F. or below.

'**Bertram Anderson**'. An *S. cauticola* hybrid with spreading stems and large blue-green leaves suffused with purple. It is decorated in the fall with compact clusters of rose-pink flowers.

***makinoi* 'Ogon'**. A low, dense mat, with closely branched slender stems, hidden by small, roundish brilliant yellow leaves. The little yellow flowers with orange anthers are attractive, but outshone by the leaves.

'**Matrona**'. A chance seedling from Ewald Hugin's nursery in Freiberg, Germany, presumably involving *S. telephium* 'Atropurpureum' and *S.* 'Autumn Joy'. It has thick stems up to 1' high and huge (to 4") nearly round, blue-green leaves. It carries generous, yarrow-like clusters of light pink flowers in summer and early fall.

pachyclados. Dense, tight mats of roundish, toothed blue green leaves stay tidy year round. Sprays of creamy white flowers appear over the leaves in spring and early summer. Native to the mountains of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. It delights in full sun. Hardy to 0°F. or less.

palmeri. Arching stems with oblong light green leaves form loose mounds to 18". Sprays of bright yellow flowers are held over the leaves in late winter. This succulent from the mountains of Mexico is tolerant of cold to at least 10°F. Best in sun, with good drainage and occasional water.

sieboldii. Japan. This species produces compact crowns, with many trailing seasonal stems radiating out from the base. Both the stems and the roundish, scallop-edged leaves are usually grey-green in color, sometimes flushed with purple in new growth and more strikingly so in the fall. Each shoot is tipped in

late summer or fall by a dense short cluster of pink to crimson flowers. It dies to the base in winter. '**Variegatum**' is distinguished by blue-green leaves marbled irregularly with cream. The flowers are pink. '**Rose Glow**' is a hybrid of similar habit and foliage. However, the entire plant is suffused with purple. It is also remarkably floriferous, bearing large clusters of deep purplish rose blossoms in late summer and fall.

spathulifolium. A matting native, often encountered on rock cliffs and shady banks. Its small, flattened leaves are packed into flat rosettes, from which spoke-like clusters of yellow flowers appear in summer. '**Cape Blanco**' is the most widely circulated cultivar. It makes broad, dense mats with bright grey leaves. '**Purpleum**' is another particularly compact selection, its leaves heavily tinged with purple, deepening in winter. Both are best in part shade, except near the coast.

spectabile. Along with *S. telephium*, below, this is a major source of the taller, showy modern hybrids. It forms dense clumps, with winter-deciduous stems up to 2' high. These are closely lined by pairs or whorls of broad, thick leaves, each up to 4" long. Both stems and leaves are chalky blue-green in color. In late summer and fall broad, yarrow-like clusters of long-lasting flowers are borne at the shoot tips. '**Brilliant**' is a traditional favorite with vivid pink flowers.

spurium. This easy, familiar groundcover stays low, dense and is useful in rock gardens, for edging and in small scale groundcover. Short stems carry rounded leaves and clusters of small starry flowers in summer. '**Dragon's Blood**' has dark red leaves and bright pink flowers, '**John Creech**' makes lush green mats and carries bright rose pink flowers in summer, and '**Voodoo**' is a newer seed strain from Jelitto Seeds. Our selected seedlings from 'Voodoo' combine bright, glossy red violet leaves and vivid rose red flowers. All cultivars will grow in sun or part shade, given well drained soil and moderate water and are hardy to 0°F. or less.

telephium. This is one of the really large, stocky garden stonecrops, now represented by many similar selections. It clumps rather profusely at the base, making many-stemmed colonies. The seasonal stems are up to 2' tall, and stout. Each is closely lined by broad, scallop-edged, light green to grey-green leaves, up to 3" long. Dense, broad flower clusters tip the stems in late summer and fall (or most of the summer, near the coast). The flowers are colored various shades of pink and red. '**Autumn Joy**' is one of the hybrids of this species, with salmon pink flowers which continue to deepen in color as they age, finally adopting an attractive rusty hue. It requires ample water but is hardy to 0°F. or below.

tetractinum. China. Flat mats of succulent rounded leaves are limey green in new growth, leaves maturing to a peachy bronze color. Sprays of bright yellow flowers appear over the leaves in summer. A great plant for edging, rock gardens and containers. Hardy to 0°F. or below.

'**Vera Jameson**'. This is a hybrid resembling *S. sieboldii*, above, but actually involving other species. It produces thick prostrate stems from a narrow base, both these and the broad 2" leaves heavily tinged with purple. In fall they are tipped by dense clusters of light to medium pink flowers, actually less showy than the leaves.

SEMPERVIVUM. Houseleek. Europe, North Africa, West Asia. These are remarkably hardy succulents grown for their mats of neat rosettes. The leaves are variable in size and color, nearly triangular in outline and sometimes covered by cobweb-like hairs. Older rosettes produce short stems of pink to greenish, narrow-petalled blossoms, then die, usually to be quickly covered over by new shoots. These are interesting and durable plants for rock gardens, containers, and chinks in walls. Sun or light shade, well drained soil, moderate watering. Hardy to below 0°F.

arachnoideum. Cobweb houseleek. One of the most prolific of the group, with 1/2" to 1" grey green rosettes covered by web-like white hairs. '**Cebanese**' is a cultivar with particularly large rosettes. This species is especially demanding of good soil drainage.

'Blue Boy'. This selection is notable for its large, broad-leaved rosettes. The leaves are distinctly painted in blue-grey tones, with added red shading in winter.

'Commander Hay'. Very broad rosettes with deep red-violet coloring extending halfway up the center of each green leaf. Pink flowers in summer.

'Gizmo'. Large, sharply pointed leaves, are dark glossy brownish red with olive grey center. Summer rosettes are dark olive grey, but always with a "chocolate" cast.

'Jungle Shadows'. Summer rosettes are grey with burgundy tips. Fall and winter chill flushes broad rosettes deep burgundy that lasts well into spring.

'Lady Kelly'. Large rosettes of greenish grey, somewhat wavy, sharp-pointed leaves have wide red violet edges.

'Pistachio'. The sturdy broad rosettes are bright apple green; leaf tips and edges are rosy throughout winter months.

'Rita Jane'. Carpets of bright rosettes, the individual leaves having green centers and red violet edges.

'Rubicon'. Smaller, densely clustered rosettes are very glossy red purple, with green hints in the tight centers.

'Spring Beauty'. Light misty green rosettes are tightly clustered. Summer flowers are rose pink.

tectorum **'Greenii'**. One of the most colorful, with grey green leaves tipped with maroon even in summer. The outer edge of each leaf is painted maroon in winter, making an even more vivid contrast.

SENECIO. The genus Senecio is huge and includes trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals—including many noxious weeds—as well as some interesting succulents. Succulent senecios are typically grown for interesting foliage and form. These selections do well in sun or light shade, with moderate to very little summer water.

mandraliscae. Blue chalk fingers. Round blue-grey 3-4" leaves stand erect on spreading stems on this South African succulent that grows to 18" tall. Creamy white flowers in summer are not particularly showy. Hardy to 15-20°F.

talinoides **'Jolly Gray'**. This interesting hybrid has greyer leaves than the preceding species, and leaves are flatter and often have branched tips. Spreading stems form a dense carpet to 12-18", and the leaves curve upward. Small sprays of white flowers in summer are not showy. Hardy to 10-15°F.

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