

Care
Guide



Make a
statement

Cacti & succulents *made easy*



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Caring for Cacti and Succulents

With their strong architectural shapes, cacti and succulents make a bold statement in any bright, sunny room. They are a large and varied group of plants with low maintenance needs, making them an easy houseplant option.

Cacti

Whilst cacti are members of the succulent family, their spines classify them as a separate group. All cacti are 'Americans', ranging as far north as western Canada down to the southernmost tip of South America. They have adapted to cope in all landscape conditions from high and low altitude deserts to tropical rainforests, where they climb up or live in trees.

Desert Cacti

This is the most familiar range, heralding from the hot American deserts and high Patagonia plains. They prefer a sunny, south facing room.



Recommended Varieties

Cleistocactus – easy to care for, this cactus forms long thin bodies that can branch. Flowers freely over 30-80cms in height.

Echinocactus – a.k.a 'Mother-in-law's armchair'. A spherical cactus with tough, compact, yellow spines.

Echinocerus – popular group that come in all shapes and sizes although nearly always having dense spines with twelve ribs.

Gymnocalycium – flat spherical cactus with well defined, broad ribs, ranges from light-green and dark-green to silver-green.

Mammillaria – draped in woolly, white spines, this cactus flowers freely in May and can produce a second and third flush later in the year.

Oputina – Thick, oval, leaf-like bodies, often blue-green in colour.

Sulcorebutia – masses of criss-crossing spines on a small compact plant. Produces an abundance of hot-pink flowers in the summer.



Succulents

The smooth, rosettes of succulent plants make an ideal centrepiece. Similar to cacti, all succulents capture the sun's energy differently to other plants, allowing them to efficiently use water at the expense of slowing their growth. They look best when displayed in a wide flat bowl.

Recommended Varieties

Echeveria – an indoor and outdoor plant with architectural rosettes in a range of different shades and patterns.

Aloe vera – popular, up-right plant known for its medicinal properties. Mainly grown as an indoor plant with the UK.

Sempervivum – a.k.a **Houseleeks**, are a group of very hardy succulent plants that are ideal for a rockery, rock garden, alpine trough or clay pot.



Forest Cacti

These cacti are from tropical areas and need to be treated slightly differently to their desert-growing cousins. They prefer an east facing room or partial shade, mimicking forest conditions.

Recommended Varieties

Christmas cactus – a.k.a **Schlumbergera**. Produces long, branching, leaf-like, segmented stems. Flowers appear over our winter, available in different colours.

Easter cactus – a.k.a **Rhipsalidopsis**. Similar to Christmas cactus, this produces long, branching, oval shaped, segmented stems. Flowers during our spring in colours of orange, pink or red.

Orchid cactus – a.k.a **Epiphyllum**. Grows on other plants and uses them for support. Their long, leaf-like stems make them ideal for indoor hanging baskets. Prefers bright, filtered light and high humidity.

Care

Compost – All cacti and succulents prefer an open, free draining compost. Premixed Cacti compost is readily available, else mix John Innes No2 with 30% extra grit or fine gravel by volume.

Position – Desert cacti and succulents prefer a sunny, south facing room. Forest cacti prefer an east facing room or partial shade, mimicking forest conditions.

Watering – Allow compost to dry out between watering as they don't like being soggy.

Feeding – Use a fertiliser formulated for Cacti as they need less nitrogen than foliage plants.

Flowering – To get cacti to flower, stop watering them during the winter and start watering them in the spring.

Handling – concertina-fold a sheet of newspaper into a long ribbon to loop around your cactus to handle it without spiking yourself.



Remove dust by using a small paintbrush

Did you know?

Cacti were only introduced into Europe after the Americas were discovered in 1492.

How to display

- Keep things simple and limit the number of plants per pot, preferably to an odd number as that looks more aesthetic.
- Position tallest specimens at the back, smallest at the front so they don't become starved of light.
- Use a suitable decorative finish on top of the soil to create a scene. Cacti and succulents look great against a backdrop of gravel and a few larger rocks or pebbles.
- Smaller specimens look good as a collection in a wide, flat bowl.
- Large cacti specimens look better in their own pot as a statement piece.

Overcoming Problems

Cacti and succulents are generally resistant to illness and rarely fall victim to pests and diseases.

Bugs: Treat any infestations of aphids, scale insect or mealy bugs through either manual removal or with a suitable insecticide.

Splitting: Occurs when growth becomes too rapid. Cut down on watering and feeding.

No growth or shrinkage: Shrinking can occur if the plant is not receiving enough water during spring and summer but can also occur if the roots are being attacked. If watering isn't the problem, lift the plant out of its pot to inspect the root system for insect larvae.

Reluctance to flower: In winter, allow the cacti to rest in a cool, dry place without any water or food.

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