

Year Round Gardening

Creating Succulent Gardens in Containers

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I love summer pots filled with annuals that bloom all summer, but these plantings need constant watering, deadheading and frequent fertilization. If you are looking for a less demanding, eye-catching planter consider a container garden using succulent plants.

Succulent plants are plants with fleshy leaves and stems, capable of withstanding drought. They come from a wide variety of botanical families. They are not quite as drought tolerant as cactus, but grow more quickly, they tend to be shallow rooted and therefore pot selection can be a wide vessel as shallow as 6", no need to deal with huge quantities of soil in deep pots.

Container grown succulents can be an annual (not winter hardy) or perennial. The key is plant selection. Pay attention to hardiness information on the plant label, most of Colorado Springs is a zone 5, meaning winter temperatures down to -20° F. There are many succulents that can tolerate our winters, hens and chicks (*Sempervivens* sp.), sedums (*Sedum* sp.), iceplant (*Delosperma* sp) are a few examples. If colorful blooms are more important for you than winter hardiness consider a container of moss rose (*Portulaca grandiflora*), this is low maintenance annual which is more drought tolerant than other annual choices.



Photo courtesy of Fredericka Bogardus

Planter design with perennial succulents is more about the foliage shapes and shades. Interesting designs can be created with the almost-other-world morphology of these plants. You may get blooms, but it is really the interesting shapes and colors of these plants which attract attention.

Succulents need well drained soil, and little fertilization. Most thrive in full sun. A mulch of pebbles can be an attractive addition to your pots. In winter move your perennial succulent pots to a sheltered location if possible. A covering of frost cloth may be beneficial to these plants in winter. I leave it on until mid-spring because the covering discourages animals from disrupting the plants in early spring. These plants are fairly deer and rabbit resistant, but if the deer are hungry enough they may try to munch them, often leaving the plants after they pull them out.

If you would like to create one of these gardens consider attending the Make & Take succulent class at Colorado State University Extension on June 16, you will create a great planting under the guidance of Colorado Master Gardeners, and take it home that day. More information at <http://elpaso.extension.colostate.edu/>.

When you have questions, CSU Extension has research-based answers. Get answers to your horticulture questions at ask.extension.org or visit the office at 17 N. Spruce Street. Help Desk hours are Monday to Thursday from 9 am – 12 pm, phone 520-7684 or email CSUmq2@elpasoco.com. For upcoming events visit <http://elpaso.extension.colostate.edu/>.