

# POLK COUNTY FACTSHEET

## SUCCULENTS

Succulents are plants which have developed fleshy water storage structures in their leaves, stems, or stem-root (caudex) that enable them to survive periods of drought. There are approximately 10,000 species worldwide. All cacti are succulents but not all succulents are cacti.

### Families

Succulents are found worldwide in over 60 plant families. Some important families that include succulents are:

**Agavaceae** includes N. American Yucca.

**Apocynaceae** Desert Rose (caudex example).

**Asparagaceae**— *Sansevieria* (snake plants).

**Asphodelaceae** predominately leaf succulents, including Aloes and Bulbine.

**Cactaceae** 2,500 species or ¼ total species of succulents, fleshy stems. Leafless so the stem must manufacture the plant’s food.

**Crassulaceae** are predominately leaf succulents.



CLONES OR OFFSPRING ON LEAF EDGE.

May produce offspring (clones) from the leaf edge.

In *Echeveria*, *Aeonium*, and *Sempervivum* the leaves form



PHOTO BY: SUE GRINATH

rosettes. *Graptopetalums* are native to Mexico and USA. Includes *Sedums*, *Kolancoes*.

**Euphorbiaceae** Most have fleshy stems. 2,000 species, most from Africa but some from the Americas. They may appear very different from one another but share a flower which is highly reduced and unisexual (may be male, female or both) Many resemble corals and other sea creatures. Examples include Pencil Plant and Crown of Thorns.

**Mesembryanthembaceae.** Lithops (living stones).

### Care & Maintenance

The huge variety of succulents doesn’t come with a single set of care instructions . The following are general guidelines. It is always best to research specific instructions for each species.

### Water

Water only after soil is almost completely dry. If keeping your succulents outside during the

winter, once a month watering is sufficient for most of them; they are dormant.

## Soil

The soil for succulents needs to be well-draining. Mix for pots may include 50 –75 % inorganic matter in the form of perlite, sand, or pumice. For the organic part use coir, compost, or potting soil. Some peat may also be incorporated.

## Prune

Prune your succulents to keep them the size you want or if they get too leggy. This is best done during the growing season.

## Pests

Pests such as aphids, spider mites, mealybugs, slugs and snails may appear on your plants. For slugs and snails, handpick or use bait that contains iron phosphate. For bugs, dilute rubbing alcohol with an equal part of distilled water and spray.

## Dust

Dust your plants, if need be, with a make-up brush. You can also blow dirt off with a straw.

## Bright Light

Bright light is appreciated but most succulents cannot tolerate the intensity of Florida's summer sunshine. Dappled shade or morning sunlight only is preferred.

## Fertilize

Apply fertilizer once in the spring with diluted (1/2) liquid fertilizer.

## Repot

Repot your succulents annually with fresh soil for best results.



PROPAGATION FOR CUTTINGS.

## Propagation

Leaf succulents like aloes and hens and chicks will propagate themselves by sending up pups. Clustering species are easily divided. Many succulents grow well from cuttings. Allow them to sit for a few days (or more, if needed) to form a callous on the cut end before planting. For rosette types, after cutting off the rosette to replant, the old plant will normally send out a couple of new rosettes. Many members of the Crassulaceae family can be propagated from a leaf. The new plant emerges from the base of the old leaf so they need to be laid on top of the soil. Cacti sections also root very easily. Pruning and propagation often go hand in hand. Succulents may be grown from seed but seeds are small and patience is required.



A WELL-MAINTAINED SUCCULENT GARDEN.



## Uses and Fun Things

### In your yard

Yucca's and agaves make great focal points for Florida yards. See the UF/IFAS publication listed below for more information. Some cacti such as prickly pear will also do well in the ground. Most smaller succulents will be happier in a well-draining pot. Our summers are simply too wet to successfully grow them in the ground.

### Creatively

One of the fun things about succulents is their variety of shapes and colors. Using these creatively can be very rewarding. Pot them in unusual objects. Make bouquets, boutonnieres, centerpieces, magnets, placecard holders, topiary balls, wreaths, even jewelry. Many will look nice for a couple of months, cut, without additional water.

## Where can I find more information?

For a list of our programs and related topics, go to our website <http://polkextension.com> or check out our Eventbrite website <http://polkgardening.eventbrite.com>.

## For more information on succulents:

Agave and Yucca: Tough Plants for Tough Times.

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep419>

Creating a Succulent Dish Garden, UF/IFAS Extension Polk County Fact Sheet.

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/polkco/files/2017/06/RH-Fact-Sheet-Dish-Gardens.pdf>

Succulents, UF/IFAS Extension Polk County Fact Sheet.

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/polkco/files/2017/09/Dish-Garden-Succulents-Info-sheet.pdf>

## Or, Call your County Extension Agent:

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All chemicals should be used in accordance with directions on the manufacturer's label.

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