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Secrets of Success with Succulents
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Everyone is wild about succulents! These popular, low maintenance, drought tolerant plants have a lot to offer the home gardener. Whether you have an acre or just need a few pretty pots to dress up the deck, no-fuss succulents will add a rainbow of color and texture to your landscape.

From over 10,000 different species of jewel-toned succulents, there are sure to be many that will capture your fancy. Before you make your landscaping choices, here are some interesting tips about succulents and cacti.

Take a close look at succulent plant leaves. You will note that their leaves are thick, fleshy, and somewhat waxy. Succulents and cacti store water in their cell membranes, for use when water is minimal. This is one of the main reasons why succulents are favorite plants in drought tolerant, low water use gardens.

Cacti are one of many types of succulents. The distinguishing feature cacti are areoles, the small cotton-like lumps from which spines grow. All cacti have areoles, making them easy to identify. Keep in mind that many other succulents may have prickly, spiked leaves, but no areoles.

Succulents are low maintenance, but not zero maintenance. Water and light have to be just right for them to survive and flourish. Under the right conditions, succulents can thrive indoors by a sunny window or outside in bright light, but usually not in direct sunlight, unless gradually introduced to full sun. Plants can get sunburned. Too little sun can cause plants to stretch and

elongate, which is called etioliation. Lack of sun can also cause root rot if soil stays moist for too long. Light shade or early morning sun is preferred.

Be careful not to overwater your succulents. Overwatering will cause leaves to soften and rot, and plants will die. Succulents need to dry out before each watering. Thin leaf succulents can tolerate more water than thick leaf plants. Of course, if the weather is extremely hot and soil is very dry, water more frequently.

Most succulents need protection in weather below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. During short periods of cold, use a plant blanket to cover tender plants. For longer frosty days, bring your prized plants inside, near a sunny window.

Prolific propagation is easy! Forget about planting seeds. It takes a long time and can be difficult. A better option is to take a leaf cutting. Individual leaves are easily rooted and eventually become new plants. Let the harvested leaves dry out for a few days, then plant in a light sandy soil with good drainage. Potting mix labeled Cactus/Succulent/Palm will work just fine. Keep soil barely moist in a partially sunny location until the new plant is rooted. Mature cuttings are even easier. Separate new plant pups from the mother plant, or cut a mature plant stem, dry a bit, and plant in succulent potting mix soil. Instant succulent arrangement!

Why do we love succulents? These versatile plants can live in many different habitats. From deserts to mountaintops, jungles, and maritime locations near oceans. They are beautiful and nearly indestructible. Potted or in-ground planting options are endless. Put them together with some imagination, and you'll have artful succulent success!

A wonderful event for children aged five to 12, called Grow n' Show (Your Plants at the Fair) will be held on Saturday, March 30, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Master Gardener Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville. Interested students are encouraged to preregister online at http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/El_Dorado_County_Fair/ or by calling the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County office.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512, or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on our website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information on days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram.