

HOW TO WATER SUCCULENTS

Watering succulents is the most important aspect of care, especially when you're first starting out. Using the right watering methods is key to keeping your succulents happy and healthy.

USE A DRAINAGE HOLE AND WELL-DRAINING SOIL

These watering instructions assume that you have a drainage hole in your pot and well-draining soil. If you don't have a drainage hole and well-draining soil, it doesn't matter how careful you are about watering; your plants will eventually die because the soil won't dry out completely. Succulents do not like to sit in wet soil, and without a drainage hole, you'll end up with wet soil around the roots that won't dry out.



A drainage hole is essential for healthy succulents.

SOAK THOROUGHLY

The arid environments where succulents naturally grow don't get rain very often, but when it does rain, it pours. Keep this in mind when watering your succulents. When you water succulents in containers, pour water on the arrangement in a slow, steady stream until the soil is fully saturated and water begins to flow out the bottom (this is why a drainage hole is so important). This will provide plenty of water for the roots to absorb.



Provide water until it begins to flow out of the drainage hole.

ALLOW TO DRY

After soaking, allow the soil to dry out. When the soil has been dry for a couple days, give the succulents another soak. Having plenty of water allows the succulents to put out strong roots and soak up a lot of water to fill the leaves. They continue to grow during the period of "drought" with the water they've stored. When watered again, the plant knows it's going to be a while before more water comes and soaks up as much as it can. This is a healthy cycle that keeps the roots and plant plump and healthy.

WHERE TO WATER

A tight succulent arrangement can be difficult to water without getting too much water on the leaves. Watering the rosette of a succulent should be avoided if possible. Often water will pool in crevices on or around the leaves and cause the leaf to rot. Standing water also invites bugs to make a home in your plant. Whenever possible, water the soil around the succulent, not on top of the plant. If possible, find a watering can with a small spout. Use this to water between your plants rather than on top of them.

You can also place a watering stone in each of your arrangements. A watering stone can be any rock you like. Simply pour water on the stone and let it run off onto other areas of the container. Using a watering stone also prevents the soil or top dressing from being disturbed during watering.



A small spout can fit between plants.

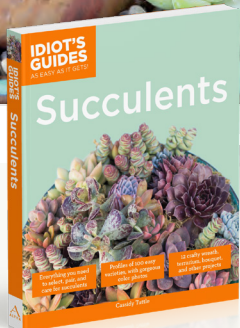
misting

Many people suggest misting succulents with water. While this works on a short-term basis, it doesn't promote good root growth. Misting can work well to keep a temporary arrangement looking fresh longer, but isn't recommended for arrangements you intend to keep a long time.



For the curious

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WHEN TO WATER SUCCULENTS

While succulents are known for being drought tolerant, there is a wide range of water needs within the group. It may take some time for you to refine your watering schedule.

LET THE LEAVES BE YOUR GUIDE

As a general rule, succulents with thinner leaves will need to be watered more frequently, while succulents with thicker leaves can go longer between waterings. Along with that, succulents with thicker leaves don't tolerate overwatering as well as thinner-leaved succulents. *Echeverias* tend to be especially sensitive to overwatering.



When leaves begin to look dry and shriveled, it's time to water.

WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T WATER

If you're worried about how frequently you are watering your succulents, err on the side of under-watering. It is much easier to give a plant more water than to save a plant that has rotted from overwatering. Especially when growing indoors, it can be hard to know how often to water. If you're watering more than once a week and your plant isn't looking good, cut back on watering. It does take some trial and error to get on a regular schedule. Most people tend to overwater and aren't able to save their plants by the time they realize their mistake.



Don't water if the soil is still wet. Err on the side of under-watering.



Plant succulents together that have the same active growing season.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE SEASON

Succulents go through a period of dormancy during which they stop growing or their growing slows down considerably. During dormancy they don't need much water. While in their active growing season, however, they like to be watered regularly. They will offset more readily, produce better colors, and look better overall if given enough water during their growing season.

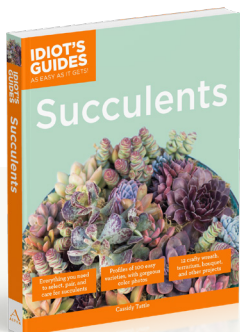
Growing indoors can disrupt the dormancy cycle as there isn't a significant change in temperature or duration of light like there is between summer and winter outdoors. You'll still notice a change in the amount of growth, but it won't be as apparent. Many succulents are dormant during the winter. If you are constantly running the heater, they will dry out more quickly and will still likely need to be watered regularly.

summer growers

Agave
Ceropegia
Echeveria
Euphorbia
Lithops

winter growers

Aeonium
Aloe
Cotyledon
Crassula
Gasteria
Graptopetalum
Graptoveria
Haworthia
Kalanchoe
Pachyveria
Peperomia
Portulacaria
Sansevieria
Sedum
Senecio



IDENTIFYING WATERING PROBLEMS

Overwatering is much more common than not watering enough, but both can be problematic for your plants. Here's what to look for if you suspect your succulent is getting too much water or not enough.

TOO MUCH WATER

The early signs and symptoms of overwatering can be difficult to distinguish from under-watering. One of the first signs is soft, wrinkled leaves; they'll feel similar to your fingers or toes after they've been in water too long. You'll also notice that the leaves fall off easily. The leaves are too full of water to stay properly attached.

As the damage from overwatering progresses, the lower stem of the plant and even lower leaves will start to blacken from rot. This is the easiest way to tell whether you've been overwatering, but it's hard to save your plant at this point.

To save a succulent that has been overwatered, cut off any part of the plant that hasn't been affected by the rot. If there is any black inside the stem, keep cutting it off. You don't want any black left on the cutting. Follow the directions for propagating cuttings (in the "Propagating Succulents" section) to plant the cutting.

signs of overwatering

- Soft, wrinkled leaves
- Black rot on lower stems
- Leaves fall off easily



Blackened stems are a sign of overwatering.

NOT ENOUGH WATER

Under-watered leaves tend to feel dry and almost crispy. If it has been a few weeks since you watered and your succulent is starting to shrivel, it's likely that your plant is under-watered.

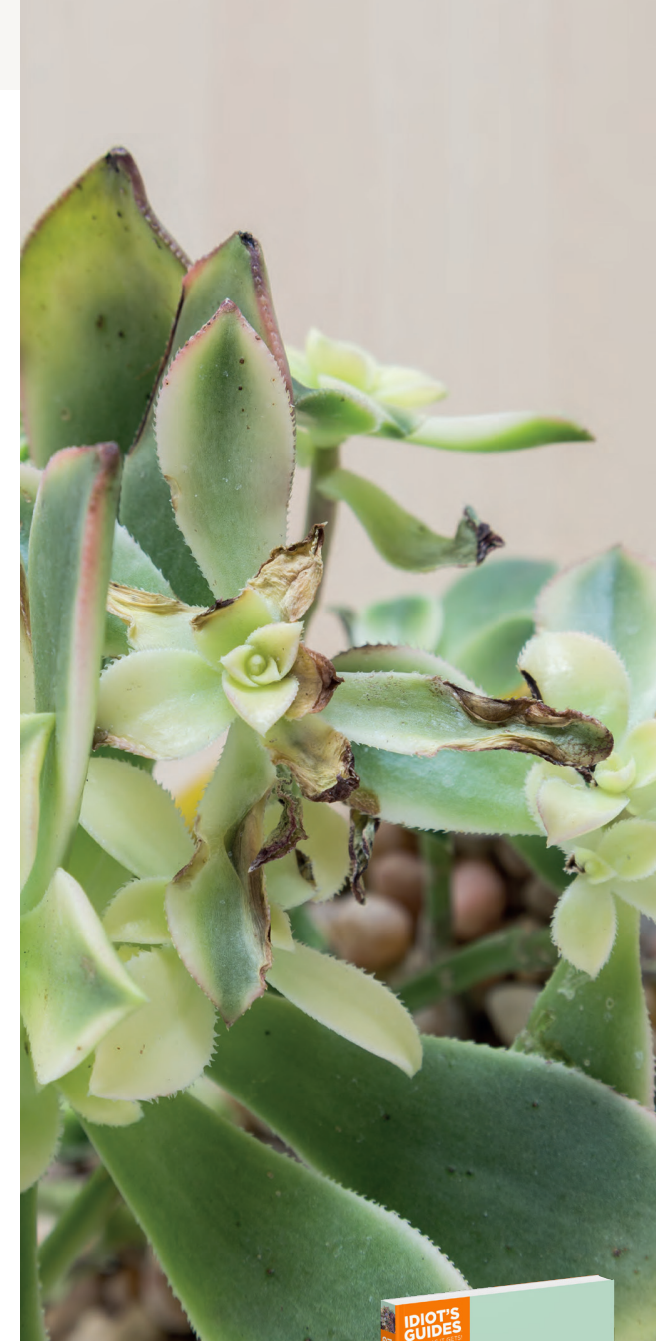
When you check to see whether your plant needs water, feel the top leaves or new growth. These should feel plump and firm when properly watered. It is completely normal for lower leaves on succulents to shrivel and die after a time. This is one of the most common concerns people have with their succulents. Stores often keep their succulents cleaned up so you don't see any dead leaves. After a few weeks, the lower leaves will start to die as part of the regular growth cycle. If the new growth is firm and not shriveled, the succulent is likely getting enough water.

If your succulent isn't growing very quickly, it may need more water. Most succulents are fairly slow growing, but no new growth over a few weeks means you need to water more. If you've left your succulent for too long without water, the stem will also begin to constrict. It should plump out a little bit once it's watered, but it will have some permanent scarring.

Don't be afraid to experiment with your watering schedule. Each home or growing environment is unique. The selection of plants you own will also determine your watering frequency. Always err on the side of under-watering, but try different amounts of time between watering to see what works best for your plants.

signs of under-watering

- Dry, crispy leaves
- Not growing
- Stem is constricted



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