

Cactus & Succulents

"Nature's Oddities"

How's this for a riddle? Cacti are Succulents, but not all Succulents are Cacti.

A succulent plant stores moisture in its leaves, stems or roots. Cacti have a modified part called areole from which leaves, spines, flowers, and branches are formed. Other succulent plants have leaf nodes that produce leaves, flowers and stems with thorns being produced on the stems or leaves. Cacti and succulents originate from tropical to desert regions, with most found in dry, desert areas.

Most nursery stock plants have been grown in a warm and slightly shaded greenhouse. To prevent possible sunburn, acclimate your plants to full sun by raising them in an indoor location with 24% to 50% shade at all times. If that's not possible, expose only to morning and late afternoon sun. Most plants will survive in full sun. Some plants naturally live shaded by grasses and small shrubs and will burn in full sun. Too much shade causes plants to have a pale narrow growth that is elongated or "leggy". Tropical to subtropical plants may freeze.

To grow, use a well-draining soil such as a cactus and succulent potting soil or a regular house plant soil amended with _ pumice or perlite added. If you grow them in pots, be sure to keep drainage holes open and never allow the pots to stand in water.

Water them thoroughly when they are fairly dry in the warmer, active growing season. Less frequent watering is required in humid or cooler weather when dormant.

Fertilize with an all-purpose fertilizer at _ the label strength using the recommended intervals to prevent burning. Fertilize during the warm active growing season.

Handle your spiny plants with caution. Use charcoal thongs, rolled newspaper or a short length of garden hose.

Remember that Euphorbias contain toxic latex. Wash your hands with soap and water after handling a Euphorbia to prevent a possible rash.