

Successful Succulents: Contemporary Container Classics



Sedum (Stonecrop) is part of the Crassulaceae family. They are succulents with thick, fleshy leaves that are filled with water during the growing season to help them survive periods of severe dryness. Smaller, low-growing sedums are useful in rock gardens, as ground and bank covers, and in small areas where their useful texture and color are needed. Larger sedums are effective as borders, specimens and mass planting. Most sedum species have attractive blooms, flowering any time from spring to late summer and fall; others are grown for their colorful and variegated foliage. Size, shape, color and growth patterns vary.

Sedum plants need good drainage, especially in winter. Otherwise they do well in most soils, especially for hot, dry sites, including slopes. They are easy to propagate by stem or leaf cutting. Sedum are ideal for pots and as container plantings they can be very formal or very whimsical. Any type of container may be used, such as barrels, stumps, hypertufa, sinks, strawberry jars, and be placed anywhere that you need a colorful addition to your garden. Sedum are ideal because they need very little water, even in a container, so if you are looking for an easy way to add texture or a conversation piece, sedum is your plant.

Container Planting: Choose plants and containers that complement one another. Use potting soil mixed with sand, or Complete Planting Mix. Fertilize with Root and Grow. Water sparingly and place in a sunny place. To over-winter, keep container in the garage so plants will go dormant, but root system will not freeze. Water every 6 weeks, just enough to keep medium damp. Bring out in spring when danger of hard frost is past. You may fertilize with 10-10-10 or Osmacote, but sedum are really lean and mean: over fertilizing will leave you with weak, overgrown plants. Set out in sun, and enjoy your formal or whimsical creation for many years.

Some sedums that are well-suited for pots include:



Sieboldii: green, round foliage with a red edge



'Bertram Anderson': deep burgundy-black leaves with bright purple-red flowers in summer



Cauticola 'Lidakense': blue-green leaves with a pink blush, deep pink flowers from August to October



Kamtschaticum: scalloped green leaves, yellow flowers through summer



Reflexum: blue-green, spruce-like foliage, yellow flowers, spreading type



Spurium 'Tricolor': leaves variegated white, green, and pink; small pink flowers



'Vera Jameson': mahogany foliage, arching stems of pink flowers in August, September



'Autumn Joy': heads of salmon-pink flowers mature to bronze red; Similar are 'Neon', 'Brilliant', 'Autumn Fire', 'Matrona'

Companion plants: Euphorbia, Lavender, Artemisia, Sempervivum (Hens and Chicks), Cactus, Aloe, Dianthus, Monarda