

CACTI & SUCCULENTS

There are a vast number of different types of cacti and other succulents. They come from many different countries, climates, altitudes, etc. Despite this most are happy to share similar growing conditions in cultivation, though there are some notable exceptions (such as some of the South African plants which insist on a growing period during the British winter).

Cultivation / Plantcare

Cacti and other succulents are very tolerant, and if due consideration is given to their lifestyle, they will flourish in cultivation.

It must be remembered that many of them are desert plants. It is much more likely that they will rot through overwatering than die of dehydration.

Watering

During the summer the plants should *only be watered when the compost has dried out completely*. Avoid watering during dull damp weather. *Never overwater* - do not leave the plants standing in saucers of water. Reduce the frequency of watering during autumn (ideally replace it with light sprayings). From October to early April the plants should be kept dormant and *should not be watered at all* (unless they are in a centrally heated room, when light sprayings may continue).

The use of a *low nitrogen* type fertiliser (such as tomato food) every few waterings can be beneficial.

Position

Many cacti and other succulents prefer full sunshine, though some species require some shading to prevent scorching through glass. A greenhouse is preferred though many types can be grown successfully on a sunny windowsill.

Temperature

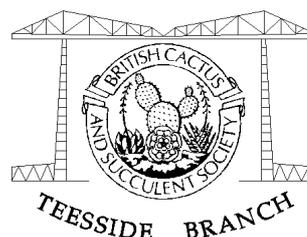
For safety the minimum winter temperature should be in the range 4 - 7°C (40 - 45°F), though many cacti can stand temperatures down to or below freezing - *but only if they are completely dry*. High temperatures can be withstood during the summer months, although adequate ventilation should be given in the hottest weather to help prevent the risk of scorching.



Mammillopsis senilis

Compost

A coarse, gritty compost, such as John Innes No. 2 with added grit to assist drainage is recommended. It is a good idea to put some grit in the bottom of the pot for drainage and also to add a layer to the top of the mixture. The latter is both decorative and practical as it helps protect the sensitive neck of the plants from moisture in the compost.



Acknowledgement

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