

# Plant Cultivation Notes

## Echeveria

### General information:

Echeveria are small rosette forming succulents that come from Mexico and Central America. They are primarily xeric plants and require little water and lots of bright light. In northern Europe, Echeveria are best grown in pots and given winter protection. Below we go through all the requirements for successful cultivation of these fantastic succulents.

### Pots and Containers:

The most important factor when choosing a container is drainage. Always choose a pot with lots of drainage, that means big holes and preferably several holes in the base. Unglazed terracotta pots are best and shallow is preferable to deep. Do not over pot. This means choosing a pot that is no more than a few centimetres wider and deeper than the last. In grouped displays, still try not to over pot. Crocking the bottom of your pot or adding a centimetre of gravel to the bottom will help with drainage. Shallow terracotta bowls are excellent for displaying Echeveria and other succulents. Never have a saucer under your potted succulents.

### Potting compost:

Any compost used for succulents must be extremely well drained. This is probably the most important factor when growing all Succulents, including Echeveria. We use the following: 2 parts coir (Coconut husk compost), 1 part John Innes №1, 2 parts 3-5mm hydroleca (or pumice) and if available: 1/2 part Horticultural grit, 1/4 part volcanic rock grit. You can come up with your own mix, but remember to add around 50% drainage material to the base material. We advise against using perlite, as this can float to the surface of the mix.

If you prefer not to mix your own composts, we do supply pre mixed cactus and succulent compost in 1 litre bags.

### Watering:

Having the right watering schedule for all succulents is important and with Echeveria this is absolutely vital. Too much water will result in rotting plants. Too little water and the leaves shrivel. Only water when the compost has dried out. The best way to water most succulents is by the immersion method. Fill a tray or container with 3 to 4 cm of water and then place your potted succulent into the water for 20 or so minutes. Lift the pot out and make sure that all excess water drains away before placing back in its usual position. Echeveria should be watered throughout warmer months. We tend to start watering in April and reduce water in September. Watering from October to the end of March is only done to prevent the plants shrivelling and only when very cold weather is not expected.

### Fertiliser and feeding.

Most succulents require some feed during the summer. We use a specialist soluble fertiliser and add it to the immersion trays once or twice a month. Look for a low nitrogen

fertiliser with a NPK of around 8-30-30 preferably with trace elements, or contact us and we can supply 50 gram bags of our specialist soluble succulent fertiliser. A good practice when using fertiliser with succulents is to use a 50% dilute solution often, rather than 100% solution infrequently. We do supply our own fertilisers for Cactus and succulents in both soluble and granular slow release, these can be purchase from our web site.

### **Light:**

Light levels are also important for Echeveria. They like lots of light, but be careful when moving plants from under glass to the patio or summer home. Echeveria that have been overwintered in a greenhouse, cool windowsill or similar, will burn in strong sunlight. Try to move your plants into well lit shade or dappled light for a week or so before exposing the plants to full sun light.

As already stated they do like lots of light and a cool but frost free green house is ideal for keeping most succulents over winter, but be aware that even on a cold winters day, greenhouse temperatures can rocket. So remember to ventilate!

### **Winter protection:**

As already mentioned Echeveria are not really that hardy. Some species might survive outside in the frost free microclimates of big cities or southern costal gardens, but generally Echeveria need to be brought under glass for winter. It is a good idea to also try to start drying out the compost before winter, we start this process in September by reducing and then halting all watering.

Echeveria do need plenty of fresh air throughout winter. Without good ventilation most Succulents will suffer with rot or fungal infections. So open greenhouse doors whenever possible or keep outside when temperatures allow.

If you do not have access to a greenhouse, cold fame or similar and are planning on over wintering your Echeveria in the house, you will need to follow a few rules. Place you plant in a south facing window. Avoid being too close to a radiator or other heat source. Do not over water, only water to stop the plant from shrivelling and if you have a saucer under your plant, make sure it never has water in it. Try to provide ventilation, open the window on warmer days and even place your plants outside if the daytime temperature outside is above 10°C, but remember to bring them back in well before nighttime.

In summary; Bright natural light, keep on the dry side and ventilate.

### **Pests and diseases:**

Echeveria are susceptible to two insect pests. Mealy Bug and Fungus Gnat. Mealy Bug are small white bugs that cover themselves in a waxy coating, making them difficult to spray. They are best removed carefully with a pin, toothpick or similar. Fungus Gnat are a problem because they lay their eggs in the soil and their larvae eat at the root system of Echeveria causing the plant to collapse. If the adult Gnats are seen, they are small black flies, treat the compost with an insecticide drench.

Echeveria are very susceptible to rot caused by over watering and lack of ventilation. At the first signs of rot, stop watering, increase ventilation and check that the potting mix is not wet. If the compost is wet, remove the plant from the pot and compost and repot using fresh, dry and open mix.

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