

Plant Ideas

- Aeoniums
- Agapanthus
- Agaves
- Aloes
- Argyranthemums
- Beschorneria
- Butias
- Chamaerops
- Convolvulus
- Crassula
- Dasylirion
- Delosperma
- Echeveria
- Echiums
- Fascicularia
- Furcraea
- Gazanias
- Lampranthus
- Optuntias
- Osteospermums
- Phoenix canariensis
- Phormiums
- Puyas
- Sedums
- Sempervivums
- Yuccas

Further Information

Please note that this information is only intended as a guide – put together from our knowledge and experience.

It should be noted, that on occasion, a plant can thrive in one situation but struggle under almost identical conditions. Like us, plants are living individuals – all different and unique. They should therefore be treated as such.

One of the best bits of advice we can give you however, is to have a look at your neighbour's garden and see what they are growing. Armed with this information and the ideas included here, you should be able to create a great desert garden.

Further Reading:

'The plant finders guide to cacti and other succulents'

by Keith Grantham & Paul Klaassen

'Cacti and succulents in habit'

by Ken Preston-Mafham

'Agaves of continental North America'

by Howard Scott Gentry

'Succulents: The Illustrated Dictionary'

by Maurizio Sajeve & Mariangela Costanzo

For more information get in touch with us, and we'll do our best to help and advise you.



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The Desert Garden

It is possible, even in the UK, to create an arid looking desert garden.

Naturally, in our environment, the key is to ensure that the site has adequate drainage. Many Agaves and Opuntias are extremely hardy and will withstand some very cold weather even down as low as -8°C if they have excellent drainage – it is the moisture that reduces their hardiness.

If you have a hot, south-facing, sloping site or extremely well drained rocky, or sandy soil you can create a desert type of garden irrespective of whether you live close to the sea or inland.

Planting

Drainage

As already mentioned, you first need to ensure that the drainage is sufficient. In heavier soils this can be improved by the addition of organic matter to help break the soil up, and also plenty of mixed particle sized grit.

This needs to be dug into the soil to make it as free draining as possible. When planting we advise keeping the top 2.5cm of compost in the pot, proud of the ground. This is in order to keep the crown of the plant dry after it has been mulched with gravel.

Suitable Site

On a sloping ground the creation of small retaining walls makes an ideal site. Many varieties, but especially the Agaves, will benefit from planting on a slight angle as this stops the rain settling in the crown. In really bad winter conditions, pot planted succulents like the Agaves can be turned on their side away from the rain, to avoid the collection and saturation of water.

Spacing

How you space your plants will depend on the effect that you are aiming to create. Sparse spacing will give a more obvious arid, desert effect, or the introduction of Agapanthus, Osteospermums, Argyanthemums and Echiums can help you replicate the impressive desert like gardens of Tresco on the Isles of Scilly. The addition of Specimen Yuccas or Phoenix canariensis can add real height and structure to the space too.

After Care

Once planted, and a gravel mulch has been added around the plants, maintenance becomes very easy, with little mulching required. Another great advantage of this garden type is that once established, it will need next to no additional watering, thereby saving you time and money.

Pot Planting

Succulents make excellent, low maintenance pot plants. We advise using peat free Sylvagrow with added John Innes compost, with loads of extra grit for good drainage, when planting, topped off with a layer of gravel mulch.

Positioned in a sunny spot, you will have a striking plant, living in an environment close to that it would naturally thrive in.

The way past winters have evolved, and the unpredictable UK climate has developed, it makes sense to utilise the flexibility and mobility a pot gives you in the garden.

Should we have a bad few weeks in the winter, a pot can be positioned out of the elements, whether that be under the eaves of a roof/house out of the rain, in a greenhouse or a garage for a short period, or just turned on its side away from the thumping rain and gales.

