

# gardening

## Succulents thrive



By Pat Leuchtman  
leisure Columnist

**S**ucculents make ideal houseplants. For the novice they are undemanding and will thrive with the most basic care; for the enthusiast they can be strikingly handsome specimens in their collection.

A succulent is a plant with thick fleshy leaves that can store a supply of water. Because of this they do not need to be watered as often as regular foliage or flowering plants.

Like many plants, succulents grow most vigorously during the spring and summer months. During this period they should be watered sparingly, allowing the soil to get dry between waterings. In the winter months when they are resting they should be watered even less often, perhaps only twice a month.

Rules about watering are often frustrating for a novice because the answer to "when?" is so often "well, it all depends." It's impossible to give an iron clad watering schedule for a particular type plant because it will depend on the size of the pot, on whether the pot is clay or plastic, whether the plant is in the sun, or if when the plant is outside for the summer it must contend with drying winds.

One striking succulent is the jade tree (*Crassula*). It is widely available and when sold as a small plant it is very inexpensive. This long lived plant grows fast and as it grows older it becomes more and more attractive and impressive looking. Put it into a special decorative flowerpot or cachepot; it can become a real conversation piece.

The jade tree is quite hardy and will tolerate various kinds of abuse. It will tolerate low humidity and low temperatures. Only when temperatures go below 35 degrees will it start to suffer. The only real danger is in overwatering the plant which will

cause the roots to rot and die.

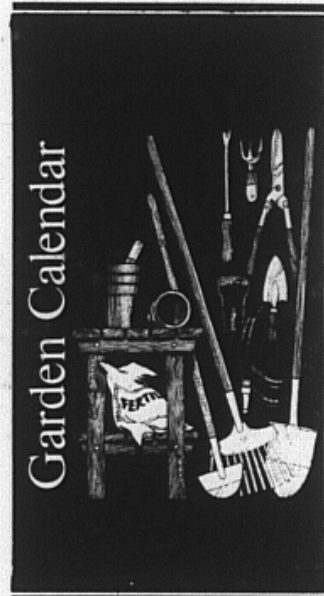
I personally know the other kinds of abuse it will endure. This summer I put my new young jade tree on my porch and it was doing fine until my hungry chickens came along one day, knocked it over and snacked on its leaves before I came along to rescue it. After that I was more careful about where I put it. Its wounds have healed now and it is thriving indoors in a bright, sunless window.

Because the jade tree is so fast growing, it is a heavy feeder. During

water quickly, are a good choice for jade trees and other succulents.

Crock the pot well to insure good drainage and use rich soil mixed half and half with sand or vermiculite. Put some soil in the pot, then hold the plant gently in place and dribble soil in around the roots. Don't push the roots into the soil or firm the soil into the pot as you would when re-potting most other plants.

Neither should you water the jade tree for two or three days after re-potting. Even then be patient and



The following information is provided by the Franklin County Extension Service:

Now is the time to:

- Store sand to use for slippery weather.
- Try washing insects off your plants.
- Store leftover pesticides properly, making sure correct labels are intact.
- Cut down perennial foliage and mulch well.
- Collect material such as cones and dried material now for holiday decorations later.

Note:

- When ground freezes and before temperature reaches 15 degrees, mulch strawberries with straw or pine needles. Also, mulch blueberries and raspberries.
- Birds will welcome feed now, but don't start unless you intend to continue feeding all winter.

the spring and summer you can top dress the soil in the pot with a little compost, scratch in a little steamed bone meal or water it with a dilute fish emulsion solution.

When it is time to repot the jade tree remember that its roots are shallow so don't use a deep pot. Also, clay pots, which evaporate

wait a couple of weeks before going on a regular watering schedule. Although the plant is hardy its roots are fragile; they can be easily damaged and quickly rot if they are overwatered.

You will see. Give the jade tree basic care and it will reward you with years of beauty.

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