

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

# Succulent summer



Aeoniums cluster to form a spectacular canvas. Photos Cynthia Brian

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Aeonium, Sedum, Echeveria, Sempervivum, Agave and Aloe are just a few of the over 5,000 species of succulents that will thrive in our landscapes.

### Aeonium

Native to the Canary Islands, the 35 species of aeoniums tolerate a bit of shade with rosettes that grow taller (some to five feet or more) than ground-hugging succulents. Cascading over containers, they add drama to a patio setting, especially with their conical clusters of flowers that bloom on eight-inch stems.

### Sedum

Mostly concentrated in Mexico and Europe, sedums are extremely hardy and useful in dry gardening. They are terrific in containers and often spill over. As ground covers, many are low growing, making them perfect for rock gardens.

### Echeveria

Always formed in rosettes and mostly derived from Mexico, these colorful succulents can be frilly, rounded or fuzzy, boasting an arching stalk of a bell-shaped flower.

### Sempervivum

Native to Southern and Central Europe, sempervivum is a succulent rosette. The plants flower only once before dying making this genus monocarpic. Before dying, they produce a pup or chick around their mother plant.

### Agave

Tequila is made from the agave plant, although the sap from the agave is toxic to both humans and pets. Hailing from North America, these rosette-shaped succulents have long, spiny tips with specimens that grow to 10 feet in height and diameter as well as dish-size varieties. They produce a tall flower stalk from their center at maturity, which could be decades, then die.

### Aloe

There are hundreds of species of aloes originating from Africa or Central America. Some are prickly, others thick and fleshy. The Aloe Vera is used for medical applications and is a "must-have" plant for households, especially useful by squeezing the juice from a leaf on a cut or burn.

To get ideas on creating a garden using succulents and other drought-tolerant plants, an enlightening excursion to the natural setting of the Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek is encouraged. [www.RuthBancroftGarden.org](http://www.RuthBancroftGarden.org). Specimens may be purchased at their nursery and gift cards are available through their online store.



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