

DUDLEYAS AND AEONIUMS

Succulents, including the cactus family, are able to survive for long periods of time without water. Cacti differ from other succulents by their padlike buds from which spines, shoots and flowers grow. All succulents are able to store moisture in their stems, roots or leaves. They can become dormant as a way to survive in severe conditions. Dudleyas, as well as sedums and hens-and-chicks (*Sempervivum*), aeonium and echeveria, are all members of the Crassulaceae family, which is known by its simple, fleshy leaves.

DUDLEYAS

One of the common names for dudleya is “live forever”. These perennials grow low to the ground with rosettes of gray-green leaves that appear to be covered with chalky powder and small yellow flowers in spring and summer. They require low water, good drainage and full sun. It is essential that dudleyas receive no water in the summer (except in containers). The fall and winter rains will bring to an end their drought-induced dormancy. They are susceptible to rot above ground if moisture accumulates in the rosette. It is helpful to plant them on a slight angle to drain water away more quickly.

Dudleya brittonii: One of the easiest dudleyas to grow. Native to Baja, CA. It has rosettes of tapered leaves covered in white, waxy powder and yellow flowers on reddish stalks in summer. It is prized for its strikingly beautiful 6 to 12 inch wide solitary rosette,

Dudleya caespitosa: Native to coastal cliffs of southern California. Common names are sand lettuce or coast dudleya. It has clumping rosettes of narrow, gray-green leaves and golden yellow flowers.

Dudleya farinose: Native to northern California and southern Oregon. It is called the powdery dudleya with gray to green, red-tipped leaves and yellow flowers.

Dudleya pulverulenta: Native to southern California. Called the chalk dudleya, it has tightly packed rosettes with small broad, gray green to blue-

gray leaves and, unusual for this species, red flowers. It needs protection from winter cold and high humidity.

Dudleya virens ssp hassei: Native to Catalina Island, CA. This dudleya has a spiky rosette and branches freely to form large, coral-like clumps. Its open habit makes it less prone to rot than other species. It is attractive to bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

AEONIUMS

Aeoniums (from the ancient Greek “aionos” meaning immortal) are another member of the Crassulaceae family of succulents and are native to parts of northern Africa and the Canary Islands. There are about 35 species that are small to medium-sized and are grown for the attractive, symmetrical pinwheel like rosettes of fleshy, waxy leaves. The leaves may be green, variegated with creamy yellow, purple or dark purple. They have conical clusters of yellow, star-shaped flowers in spring and early summer. They are dormant in summer and start growing again in the autumn. They require low water, excellent drainage and full sun to part shade.

Aeonium arboreum (Tree Aeonium) This aeonium bears large clusters of small yellow flowers in spring and has glossy rosettes that can be bright green or red.

Aeonium arboreum ‘Atropurpureum’ is called the purple rose tree. In the summer sun the green leaves turn a dark purple-red.

Aeonium arboreum ‘Albovariegatum’ The rosettes of this large bushy cultivar are variegated and often flushed with pink.

Aeonium haworthii (Pinwheel) This aeonium has gray-green leaves and sends out offsets to form mounds. It is very good for miniature gardens.

Aeonium arboreum ‘Schwartzkopf’ (Black Cap) It is so dark a purple it appears almost black. It will keep its black color throughout the winter if placed in a bright light.

Bibliography

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