
CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETY of NEW MEXICO

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GENERAL PURPOSE CACTUS SOIL RECIPE

Albuquerque has native soils that can be used to grow our plants. The soil in the foothills is almost perfect, as well as the sand of the west mesa. Only the clay in the valley is less than ideal. Following are soil mix recipes used by individual members of CSSNM. They range from relatively simple to more complex, and from easily adaptable to small amounts, to larger-quantity recipes.

For mesems and regular cacti we use this mix:

50% coarse sand (for making cement)
30% natural sandy loam soil, screened
20% grit (pumice, perlite, etc.)

For type /13/ limestone-requiring species: Use the same soil, and add approximately one part limestone per 250 parts of soil (one tablespoon per gallon of soil). You can buy horticultural limestone at most garden centers. Add more if your water is acidic, less or none if your water is hard and alkaline.

Be very careful about the sand. Look at several types and make sure that it will not compact with age. Concrete sand from a sand/gravel company usually is a good type to look at. A good sand should have different particle sizes and contain many small stones. The sandy loam soil should not be sterilized unless you have serious pests like nematodes. Natural soil has very beneficial bacteria present that help plants grow much better.

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General purpose mix for cacti and succulents:

3 parts sandy loam soil
1 part perlite or vermiculite
1 part coir (coconut husk) – expanded if bought compressed

Provided by G. Smith

General potting soil for cacti and succulents:

2/3 local loam soil
1/6 peat moss
1/6 vermiculite

Provided by S. Brack

Mix for potting cacti: (Note: Think of one part as being about the same as a five-quart ice cream bucket full.)

- 1 part good quality potting mix
- 1 part pumice
- 1 part perlite
- 1 part coir
- 1/12 part or so of osmocote
- 1 small scoop bone meal

Add two parts orchid bark if for epiphytic cacti.

Provided by C. V. Porter

My mix is:

- 96 ounces of soil
- 96 ounces of crushed red pumice (dust -> ¼-inch diameter)
- 200 ounces of sand (usually playbox)
- 1 tablespoon of gypsum
- 1 teaspoon of superphosphate
- 1 teaspoon of agricultural limestone

Dump all into concrete mixer and mix thoroughly. The soil is the critical part. You want fertile soil (knee-high grass in the monsoon season), with no bugs, chemicals – that will **not** setup like an adobe brick. I use soil from the north side of Tijeras Arroyo.

Provided by R. Peters

Light, water and soil are the three basics you need to grow any kind of plant. With cacti and succulents the type of soil is a crucial choice for successful growing. Most commercial cactus soils, while fine for some tropical succulents, are too rich in organic material for most true desert succulents. I used to use unamended native soil, and while this did work, it would compact to a point that water would sit on the surface and it was difficult to remove when repotting. I've tried many soils and this is my favorite recipe. It lasts 5-7 years in a well-drained pot, aiding in prevention of buildup of mineral salts. This recipe can be used straight, or to amend equal amounts of native soil types.

Mix together in a wheelbarrow:

- 3 gallons coir (shredded coconut husks)
- 3 gallons perlite
- 3 gallons vermiculite
- 3 gallons arroyo grit (crushed granite from arroyo beds)
- 3 gallons soil (a one-part each mix of west mesa sand, valley clay, and foothills dirt is ideal)*
- 1 gallon limestone
- 1 gallon scoria (optional)
- 1 cup aged manure
- 1/4 cup Super Sulfur
- 1/4-cup gypsum
- 1/4-cup bone meal (optional)
- 2 tablespoons powdered dolomite

* Using west side sand, valley clay or foothills dirt exclusively will not affect this mixture negatively.

Provided by B. Womak