
CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETY of NEW MEXICO

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LITHOPS CULTIVATION IN POTS

Lithops need lots of sun during nearly the whole year. A little shade is appropriate if it gets extremely hot, over 90°F in the summertime. Most of them tend to start growth in the springtime or early summer when the days warm up nicely. Start to water more often when you notice growth. Remember to provide adequate ventilation. No plant can take both intense heat and bright sunlight simultaneously.

The cooler days of late summer and early fall are the main flowering times. The end of flowering signals the end of the growth cycle for the current year. After flowering, water only a little, just enough to keep them from wrinkling severely. Small wrinkles are usual in the winter and the plants get very colorful in full sun. Keep them very cool. Night temperatures from 35°- 45°F or just above freezing are suggested. In the daytime, keep the temperatures in the 50s or 60s. Warmer temperatures should be avoided. However, one grower regularly subjects his Lithops plants to overnight lows of 25°F followed by sunny warm days. Plants from warmer areas, like, *L. optica* and *L. ruschiorum*, don't flower well in mid-Winter if they are kept so cold.

These are low, compact, thick succulent plants and come from very arid regions. Try to give them adequate light; water only to keep them going. They will quickly become uncharacteristic if given too much water or too little light.

Smaller plants, or ones that are just potted up, will need a bit more water at any time of the year. But old, mature, flowering-size plants will need very little or nearly nothing all winter. This depends on your conditions, especially warmth. A cooler place with full sun will give you very nice coloration and better flowering next fall.

In the late fall at the end of flowering and growth, they will open their fissure, and next year's leaf pairs will start showing. These new leaves will expand and feed off the old leaves. You should keep them quite dry until the old leaves have dried away. Lithops should be very flat with the soil line during the winter. They are the tallest at flowering time, but are never more than one inch high. If too high, they are not getting enough light, and/or they are getting too much water.

LITHOPS CULTIVATION IN THE YARD IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

Some Lithops species do well outside in the yard in central NM. and a **few** are fine in colder climates. Cold climate locations that stay wet and have repeated freeze/thaw cycles may not be suitable (e.g., central Iowa!).

For yard plantings, use gritty soil like decomposed granite with plenty of grit. Top dressing around the plants with light colored rocks will help (avoid dark colored rocks!)

Plant them in early spring or late fall, never plant in the dead of winter or early summer. Freshly planted Lithops in the ground would like some light watering applied a few times a week to help them get rooted, perhaps for a month.

Full **un-shaded** summer sun is the biggest threat. Because of our dry air and high elevation, the burning power of the sun is higher here than in nature. Any kind of afternoon mottled shade in the summer is helpful (e.g., from a tree canopy, or allowing some grass to grow around the Lithops). In the summer, morning sun is great but full afternoon sun is very stressful and can burn them.

I think the most hardy types here that can handle our central NM summer thunderstorms, hot summer sun, winter cold and snow, are:

- L. aucampiae
- L. hookeri
- L. lesliei
- L. salicola (grown in Colorado Springs for 20 years).

Others that may be OK are:

- L. bromfieldi
- L. dorotheae
- L. fulviceps
- L. hallii
- L. naureen
- L. olivacea (needs protection from too much rain)
- L. otzeniana
- L. terricolor
- L. verruculosum
- L. villetii