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## CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETY of NEW MEXICO

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### SOIL MIXES FOR CACTI AND SUCCULENTS (C&S)

You can ask any cactus grower about their soil and each one will likely have a different formula. This is not to say that one is right or wrong it is just about what works. C&S have some basic needs for soil and once you get them handled, you can adjust your soil.

Drainage and aeration are probably the two most important requirements for a good C&S soil mix. These plants do not like to have wet feet for long and root development requires the soil provide good aeration. This simply means that you want to provide air space in the soil mix.

With these considerations in mind, this soil recipe works well for potted C&S.

This first recipe is good for small potted plants, six (6) inches and under.

**60% red scoria** sifted to quarter inch to remove dust and bigger chunks. This provides the main drainage element. I find this product at JPR Gravel in Rio Rancho. It is cheap, last time I paid \$2 per five gallon bucket. It does have a lot of dust so you end up with a bit more than half that size of usable material after sifting.

**20% native soil**, sifted to quarter inch. The soil I use if from the west side of Belen and is a fine sandy loam that doesn't harden up in the mix. You want to look for a soil that has lots of other vegetation growing on it, grasses, etc.

**20% Mushroom compost**, sifted to quarter inch. This is added to provide some nutrients and hold moisture. You can get it at Lowes.

To this mix, small amounts of **gypsum, limestone and azomite** are added. Example, a tablespoon of each approximately for five gallons of soil mix. The **gypsum** adds calcium, the **limestone** balances pH and the **Azomite** adds trace minerals. Azomite can be purchased online while the others can be found at garden centers.

You want to avoid bagged mixes that are sold in the garden centers as they contain too much peat which is acidic and can burn and inhibit root growth. These mixes also don't provide necessary aeration.