


SEDUM

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Introduction to Sedum

Few plants offer the combination of beauty, resilience, and low maintenance that sedum does. Originally found clinging to rocky outcroppings across the Northern Hemisphere, these succulents have adapted to thrive where other plants struggle: in poor soils, through droughts, and in the harshest of exposures. Yet despite their toughness, they reward you with jewel-like foliage and clouds of star-shaped flowers.

The appeal of sedum goes far beyond its hardiness. These plants bring year-round interest to the garden. In spring, fresh rosettes emerge in shades of blue-green, silver, burgundy, and gold. Summer blooms attract bees and butterflies by the hundreds. In autumn, seed heads persist as sculptural forms, and many varieties turn fiery shades of copper and red before winter sets in.

Whether you're creating a drought-tolerant border, a wildlife-friendly meadow, a living roof, or a simple container display, there is a sedum perfectly suited to the task. Ground-hugging creeping types knit together to form weed-suppressing mats, while tall border sedums stand proudly alongside grasses and late-season perennials.



Growing Tips & Care

Sedum is famously forgiving, but a few key principles will help your plants reach their full potential. The most important rule: when in doubt, give them less: less water, less fertilizer, less fuss!

Soil & Site

Sedums demand excellent drainage above all else. They will tolerate poor, even gravelly soil, and in fact, they often look better for it. Rich, fertile soil encourages lush but floppy growth. Choose a spot with at least six hours of direct sun per day for the best flowering and most compact habit.

Watering

Once established, most sedums are exceptionally drought-tolerant. Water newly planted sedums regularly for the first season, then reduce to supplemental watering only during prolonged dry spells. Overwatering is the number one cause of sedum failure; soggy roots rot quickly.

- Water at the base, not overhead, to prevent fungal issues.
- Allow soil to dry completely between waterings.
- In containers, ensure drainage holes are unobstructed.
- Reduce watering significantly from October through March.

Feeding & Pruning

Feed sparingly! A single application of slow-release, low-nitrogen fertilizer in early spring is all most sedums need. Over-feeding leads to soft, sprawling growth. Tall border varieties benefit from being cut back by 1/3 in late May to encourage bushier, more upright plants.

Pests & Problems

Sedums are largely pest-free. Vine weevil can occasionally damage roots of container-grown plants - use nematodes in spring and autumn as a preventive treatment. Slugs may nibble young spring growth, but established plants quickly outpace any damage. Watch for crown rot in poorly drained spots.

Varieties & Species

The sedum genus is bewilderingly diverse. Here is a tour of the main genus and varieties you are likely to encounter (and love!) in your garden.

***Naming note:** Many sedums are now classified under the genus *Hylotelephium* by botanists, but the name *Sedum* remains widely used in horticulture. Don't be surprised to see one (or both) of these names on plant labels!

Notable Genus & Varieties

Variety	Type	Height	Notable Qualities
'Angelina'	Creeping mat	4"	Golden-chartreuse needles; fiery color in Autumn
'Autumn Joy'	Upright	24"	Pink-to-copper blooms; wildlife magnet and food source for birds
'Dragon's Blood'	Creeping mat	2-4"	Red-tipped foliage, crimson red flowers
acre	Creeping mat	3"	Tiny yellow stars; great for paving gaps
reflexum	Creeping mat	6"	Blue-green rosettes; needle-like foliage
sieboldii	Trailing/ Mounding	9"	Blue-grey rounded leaves; pink autumn blooms
spatulifolium	Rosette/mat	1-3"	Silver-pruinose rosettes; alpine character

Rare & Unusual Varieties to Seek Out

Beyond the well-known varieties, a world of rare sedums awaits the adventurous collector. **Sedum 'Thunderhead'** offers deep magenta blooms; **S. divergens** is a PNW native - with a rainbow of foliage color throughout the year; and the miniature **S. dasyphyllum** forms impossibly tight cushions of tiny blue-grey beads.

Spotlight: Sedum 'Autumn Joy'

If you grow only one sedum, make it 'Autumn Joy'. This legendary perennial has earned its place in countless gardens worldwide through sheer reliability and year-round beauty. Introduced in Germany in the 1950s by nurseryman Georg Arends, it remains one of the bestselling perennials of all time.

Four Seasons of Interest

- Spring brings fresh, glaucous blue-green mounds of succulent foliage. Its foliage is architectural and handsome, even before a single flower bud appears.
- By midsummer, flat-topped broccoli-like buds form in palest green.
- Come late August, these buds erupt into dense corymbs of dusty pink - a magnet for every pollinator in the garden.
- As autumn progresses, the flowers deepen from salmon to copper-bronze.

Growing 'Autumn Joy'

- Full sun is essential for upright stems. Too much shade causes flopping.
- Well-drained soil; drought-tolerant once established.
- Divide every 3–4 years in spring to maintain vigor.
- Chop back by 1/3-1/2 in late May to reduce height and prevent sprawling.

Companions & Combinations

Pair 'Autumn Joy' with ornamental grasses such as Pennisetum 'Hameln' or Panicum 'Shenandoah' for a naturalistic late-season composition. It combines beautifully with Echinacea, Rudbeckia, Agastache, and Salvia, which all benefit from the same open, sunny conditions.



Seasonal Planting Guide & Design Ideas

Season Tasks

Sedum can be planted almost year-round in mild climates, but timing your planting and maintenance tasks correctly will give the best results.

- **Spring** (March–May):
 - Plant container-grown sedums after the last frost. Divide overcrowded clumps. Cut tall varieties back by 1/3-1/2 in late May. Begin watering newly planted stock.
- **Summer** (June–August):
 - Enjoy peak bloom on creeping types. Deadhead spent flowers on low-growing varieties if desired. Water containers in prolonged heat. Take cuttings for propagation.
- **Autumn** (September–November):
 - Tall border sedums reach peak flower and color. Leave seed heads standing. Plant spring-ordered bare-root stock. Reduce container watering.
- **Winter** (December–February)
 - Enjoy architectural seed heads. Protect tender varieties with grit mulch. Order new varieties from specialist nurseries. Plan spring divisions.

Design Ideas for Gardens

Sedum's versatility makes it a designer's dream. Here are some of the most effective ways to use sedums in garden design:

- **The Prairie-Style Border**
 - Combine tall Stonecrop varieties with ornamental grasses, Echinacea, and Rudbeckia for a naturalistic, wildlife-rich planting.
 - The key is repetition - plant sedums in loose drifts of three to five plants for the most natural effect.
- **The Rock Garden**
 - Creeping sedums are perfectly at home tumbling over rocks and colonizing the gaps between paving stones.
 - Mix species with contrasting foliage (e.g., golden 'Angelina', silver S. spathulifolium, and red-tipped S. spurium) for a tapestry of color at ground level.

Sedum in Containers & Walls

One of sedum's greatest gifts to gardeners is its adaptability to small spaces, vertical surfaces, and containers. You don't need a large garden to enjoy these plants at their full potential.

Container Growing

Sedums thrive in containers, troughs, and window boxes, provided drainage is excellent. Use a purpose-made succulent compost or mix standard multipurpose with 30–40% horticultural grit. Shallow terracotta pans suit the mat-forming types beautifully; tall varieties need a deeper pot to anchor their roots.

- Choose unglazed terracotta or wooden containers for the best moisture regulation.
- Elevate pots on feet to ensure free drainage, especially in winter.
- Repot every two years in spring, refreshing the compost.
- Group containers of different heights for maximum impact.

Living Walls & Green Roofs

Sedum is the plant of choice for green roofs worldwide, and for good reason. Its low water requirements, shallow root system, and tolerance of wind and drought make it uniquely suited to thin growing media at height.

A simple sedum roof blanket — available from specialist suppliers — can transform a shed or garage roof into a wildlife habitat and an insulating green layer. Vertical living wall panels planted with an assortment of creeping sedums and sempervivums create a striking low-maintenance feature for fences, walls, and even indoor displays in bright rooms.

Sedum in Paving & Paths

Plant creeping sedums such as *S. acre* or *S. album* into the gaps between paving stones, stepping stones, or gravel. They will spread to fill the spaces, suppressing weeds and softening hard landscaping. Foot traffic is surprisingly well-tolerated by the more robust mat-forming types.