

# Cactus Care

Plant enthusiasts who feel they do not have the skills required to grow healthy house plants might want to learn how to grow cactus indoors. The desert succulents require minimal care and are hardy plants under the right conditions. Several hours of sunlight each day and well-draining soil are vital for cactus to thrive.

## Light:

Cactus prefers bright light for most of the day. A southeast exposure is best; however, southwest exposure works too as long as the cactus is not getting an abundance of direct sun. If placed in direct sun without being hardened off (gradually exposing to the full amount of sun it will be getting) some cacti can burn. If cacti do not have enough sunlight, they could stretch and become leggy and they may not flower.

## Water:

Contrary to popular belief, they do need water! There are several different factors to consider when it comes to determining how often to water. During the summer months, you will water more often because that's when most cacti are growing. Be aware of what type of cactus you have, some varieties have their growing cycle during the winter. During the winter months, watering will depend on how bright and warm the room is where your cactus resides. Generally, the cactus requires very little, check once a week. How often you water will also depend on how heavily you water each time. Best practice is to give it a thorough soaking then allowing it dry out almost completely before watering again. Never let a cactus sit in water or you run a high risk of it rotting.

## Fertilizer:

Cactus will do better with a regular feeding schedule (once a month) rather than one or two big feedings per year. They require calcium (lime) so use an appropriate cactus fertilizer or mix agricultural lime in with your soil when you transplant.

## Soil:

As you can guess, a cactus mix is the preferred soil to use. Cactus like a well-drained soil so be careful of all-purpose commercial mixtures, they'll typically hold too much moisture. Country Fair carries two different readymade cactus mixtures that we recommend you use. If you are interested in making your own soil, a good ratio is 1 part potting mix, 1 part sand, and 1 part gravel.

## Pests:

It's best to monitor your plants so that if you see something doesn't look right, you can treat it right away. Mealybug(fig1) and thrips(fig2) are the most common insect pests you'll find on cacti. Neem oil works best for control of these insects. Fungal and bacterial rots are the most common diseases and are very difficult to treat. The plant must fully dry out and stay that way for as long as possible. You can also try cutting out (removing) the section if possible. Even then, you may not be able to save your plant.



Figure 1



Figure 2



**South Denver** | 303.757.4949

2190 S. Colorado Blvd. | Denver 80222

**Arvada** | 303.209.4394

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**North Denver** | Welby Retail | 303.287.0365

7390 Clayton St. | Denver 80229