



# SUCCULENTS

The Ultimate Guide  
to Choosing, Designing,  
and Growing  
200 Easy-Care Plants

ROBIN STOCKWELL

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# HIGH DESERT RANCH

TROY WILLIAMS AND Gino Dreese, who are both landscape professionals in the Palm Springs, California, area, love rocks and cactus, which are plentiful in the high desert. They make good use of these elements around their getaway home in the Mojave Desert. Gardening conditions can be brutal here — “exposed” as Williams calls them: hot in the summer, cold in the winter, with fierce afternoon winds March through May. The low deserts of Palm Springs, where they do most of their work, “are easy,” says Williams. “The high desert is difficult.”

Still, golden barrel cactus (*Echinocactus grusonii*) thrives here; it always provides bright color. Williams and Dreese planted it in blocks or mixed it with other succulents, including agaves—*A. parryi* does extremely well here. Opuntias and chollas add color and sculptural forms, as do saguaros (*Carnegiea gigantea*). Ocotillos (*Fouquieria splendens*) root slowly, but do well once established, and they provide beautiful flowers each spring.

“Our house sits on a natural rock outcrop, and there is very little soil,” explains Williams. “So we use livestock troughs for many plantings. We place a trough where we want it, fill it with native decomposed granite and sand, then build up native rocks around it to hide and insulate it. In troughs, the water we give the plants lasts longer.” Williams and Dreese can almost watch the plants grow if they water a couple of times a week during the summer and fertilize the plants a few times a year.

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## GET THE LOOK

Plant three golden barrels around an attractive rock, with a columnar cactus in back, for a quick and easy small-area cactus garden.





## Bowled Over

Golden barrel cactus fill rock-edged beds that flank the rustic Mojave Desert ranch house. A columnar saguaro accents the foreground bed, while ocotillos fan out their upright, twiggy branches behind. To keep the barrel cactus clean of dust caused by winds, Williams and Dreese irrigate the plants with a hose and wash them off at the same time.





### Splashes of Pink

OPPOSITE Clusters of penstemons (*P. thurberi*), native to the Joshua Tree National Park area, unfurl their vivid pink blooms in April or May among the golden barrel cactus. In years of above-normal rainfall, a wider variety of wildflowers sprouts here as well, showing off their delicate beauty against the bolder golden barrels, saguaros, and bayonet leaves of the young Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*).

### Garden View

ABOVE The view toward the garden through the home's open front door is worth framing: It visually connects the interior to the plantings outdoors and the wildland beyond. Williams and Drees enhanced the view by sticking empty wine bottles through wall panels on either side of the door. The bottles are about a foot long and provide insulation as well as interesting lighting as the sun shines through them.

### GET THE LOOK

Compose your garden to fit a view. Curve the beds' edges, then group smallest succulents in foreground, tallest "eye-catchers" in back.