

Succu...

WHAT?

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The fascinating
world of succulents

Spiny, ribbed, hairy, water-storing, fat, thick-fleshed, spherical, flat, columnar: Every one of these words can be used to describe succulents. These water-storing plants thrive in arid locations, and their survival strategies are nothing short of astounding. Succulents are also extremely diverse and useful.

The special exhibition "Succu...what?" in the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle illustrates the incredible variety and ingenious survival strategies of these plants, and showcases a number of succulent useful plants which provide us with tasty fruits, medicinal substances, durable fibres and even well-known spirits.



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Cacti are (probably) among the best-known succulent plants. But did you know that also vanilla belongs to the succulent plants and was used as a spice as far back as Mayan and Aztec times? By contrast, in ancient Greece, the physician Dioscorides described the effect of the dried roots of roseroot, which smell of rose petals. The common houseleek is another medicinal plant. In the Alpine region, it was used as an ointment for insect bites and burns, among other things. In addition, it was also believed to protect against lightning strikes when grown on the roof. The anti-inflammatory and cooling gel of the aloe vera plant is added to many cosmetic products to this day. However, succulents also provide us with delicious fruits such as pineapples and papayas. They are processed into spirits such as tequila and others still are used during shamanic rituals. And who would have guessed that the resistant fibres of the sisal agave can be found in tea bags and banknotes?

Find out more about the fascinating world of succulents!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Although a cactus is a succulent, not all succulents are cacti.
- Succulents don't have thorns: they have spines. This enables them to keep predators at bay, and to shield off the heat.
- Of the nearly 380,000 plant species currently in existence, over 12,000 species are succulent.
- The heaviest cactus weighs 25 tons.
- The tallest cactus measures 16 meters, while the smallest measures only 12 millimeters.

