



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*

Well-Travelled Succulents

Plants called succulents are adapted to arid climates and are native to many places around the world. A few are even native to Florida. They are often called “Fat Plants” since their leaves are typically plump and juicy looking. Their cool looks are not fashion statements but a response to the harsh climactic conditions in which they developed. In order to survive in hot dry climates, they retain moisture in their leaves, stems, and roots and often those leaves take on interesting shapes.

Travel to the following locations around the world to find a variety of native succulents. This list only scratches the surface and these regions may have only one or a few species native to that area.

Russia – stonecrop

Northern Europe – sedum

Middle East – aloe, adenium

Madagascar – aloe and kalanchoe

Africa – aloe, bulbine, echeveria, haworthia, lithops, sansevieria, senecio, stapelia

South America – dyckia, pedilanthus, portulaca

Mexico – agave, dasylirion, echeveria, opuntia (cactus), selenicereus

Southwestern USA – agave, echinocerus, ferocacxtus, hesperaloe, nolina, ocotillo, opuntia, yucca

Florida – agave, opuntia, harissia (cactus), yucca

Most succulents are known by their Latinized botanical names. This is a sample of some with common names you may have heard: *Sansevieria* spp. - mother in law’s tongue/snake plant, *Kalanchoe thrysiflora* – cow’s tongue/flapjack plant, *Lithops* spp. – living stones, *Crassula ovata* – jade plant, and *Yucca aloifolia* – Spanish bayonet.

Many succulents are now available for purchase around the world and display greenhouses have areas dedicated to these interesting plants. Even though they may have disparate heritages, many can grow in one area because they are provided with well-drained soils (also called sharp soil/drainage) and the moisture levels are controlled. They don’t mind taking in moisture but an excess of it in poorly draining soil will rot the roots and kill the plants. Most succulents thrive in full to part sun, while others grow better in part sun. A few, such as *sansevieria*, will also take shade and make good houseplants.

We planned a recent visit to California to include two amazing gardens (Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek and Lotusland next to Santa Barbara) full of succulents. Then by happenstance while travelling between the two gardens, we discovered a nursery, Succulent Gardens in Castroville, with gorgeous vignettes of succulents. Many are arranged by the nativity of the plants.

Totally seduced by succulents we had not seen before, we accumulated a handful and managed to bring them back with us. Rest assured they are already planted in sharp soil. Please let us know if you spot a cruise line offering an around-the-world cruise focused on succulents. We’ll book it in a heartbeat!



Top photo: Succulent Gardens Nursery in Castroville, CA has numerous displays

Middle left photo: A greenhouse full of succulents at Wave Hill public garden in the Bronx

Middle right photo: Succulents abound at the Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek, CA

Bottom photo: Agaves, aloes and giant clam shells in Lotusland, a world-renowned garden

Photos by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis

JOIN US!

Join us for a seductive program about succulents – “Sexy Succulents” at Harry P. Leu Gardens on Wednesday May 17th from 6:30- 8:30 p.m. To register, call 407.246.3621 or visit www.leugardens.org/classes/.