

Sempervivum (Hens & Chicks) Care Handbook

Cold-hardy rosettes that multiply

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AGreenNest Plant Guide

Unlike most succulents, Sempervivum shrug off frost and happily spend winter outside. They earn their 'hens and chicks' nickname by packing a pot with offspring. This handbook covers the hardy types and how to overwinter them.

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Cobweb Houseleek - Sempervivum arachnoideum

The white 'web' is natural -- don't pick it off.

Care at a glance: light: full, direct sun for most of the day; water deeply every ~18 days (far less in winter); a gritty, free-draining succulent mix; happiest around -10-80F; propagate by an offset pup pulled from the base or fresh seed sown on the surface; pet-safe.

Quick facts

- Light: full, direct sun for most of the day.
- Water: deeply every ~18 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: -10-80F (-23-27C).
- Humidity: dry air is fine.
- Soil: a gritty, free-draining succulent mix.
- Propagate: an offset pup pulled from the base or fresh seed sown on the surface.
- Pet: generally safe around pets.

It is among the few succulents that survive real outdoor winters (hardy to zone 5).

Hens and Chicks - Sempervivum tectorum

The mother rosette dies after flowering but leaves a ring of chicks.

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'Sempervivum' means 'always living' -- it spreads forever once established.

General Care Principles

No matter the species in this handbook, a handful of principles carry most of the weight. Get these right and the individual notes above become fine-tuning.

Match the plant to the light: sun-lovers go in the brightest window or under a grow light; shade-lovers go in east or north light. Wrong light is the single most common cause of failure.

Water on the plant's schedule, not the calendar. Soak thoroughly, then let the soil dry before the next drink. In winter, ease right off - most of these plants want a cool, dry rest.

Use the right soil and a draining pot. Free-draining for succulents, moisture-retentive but aerated for ferns and foliage. A drainage hole is non-negotiable.

Propagate to multiply. Almost every plant here can be cloned from a leaf, offset, division, or cutting - see each species for its best method.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often should I really water?

Forget frequent sips. Soak the soil completely, then let it dry out fully before the next drink. In winter most of these plants want a long, dry rest. The lift test (light pot = dry) beats any calendar.

My plant is stretching and pale - what does that mean?

It wants more light. Move it to a brighter window or add a full-spectrum LED grow light. New growth will be compact and colourful; the stretched part will not undo itself, so behead and re-root the top if you like.

What soil should I use?

A free-draining mix is non-negotiable. For succulents that means gritty, sandy soil in a pot with a real drainage hole. For leafy types a peat-free houseplant mix is fine. Sitting in wet soil is the fastest route to rot.

Is this plant safe around my pets?

We note pet safety per species in this guide. 'Pet-safe' means it is not on the usual toxic lists, but no plant is food - keep curious cats and dogs from chewing leaves, and call a vet if you are worried.

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