

A living succulent centerpiece comes together by planting small succulents in a shallow container with drainage holes and gritty mix. Give the plants room to spread, provide bright light, and water only after the soil has dried.

Pick a planter and suitable succulents

Choose a shallow bowl or planter with holes in its base, and place it on a saucer to keep the table protected. A container without drainage is more difficult to water carefully, since any extra water has no way to escape.

Select small plants that call for similar amounts of light and water. Look for firm leaves and specimens that sit steadily in their pots. Combining rounded rosettes, upright stems, and trailing growth can add varied shapes while keeping the display from feeling crowded.

Think about the arrangement's height before planting. A low centerpiece on a dining table helps people see one another and talk across the table.

Set out the materials

Gather your supplies on a cleared work surface before you begin. You will need:

- A shallow planter with drainage holes, along with a saucer
- Small succulents in their nursery pots
- Potting mix intended for cacti and succulents
- A small trowel or scoop
- Fine gravel for a decorative surface, if you want one

Fill the planter with potting mix rather than putting gravel beneath the mix. The drainage hole is what allows excess water to leave the container.

Arrange and plant the succulents

First, add enough mix to cover the planter's bottom. To test the composition, place the plants on top while they are still in their nursery pots. Position a larger plant a little away from the center, then set smaller ones around it. A trailing plant can go near the rim.

When the layout looks right, take each succulent out of its pot. Carefully ease apart roots that are tightly packed, then settle each plant into the mix. Keep each plant's base close to the soil height it had in its nursery pot.

Work more mix into the open spaces and press it gently into position. Leave some room between plants so air can circulate and the succulents can grow. For a gravel finish, add only a thin covering and avoid letting it touch leaves or stems.

Keep the display in good condition

Set the centerpiece in a spot with bright light. A dining table away from a window may suit a meal, but it might not give the plants enough light for continued growth. After displaying it there, return the planter to a brighter location.

Check the soil rather than following a set watering calendar. Once it has dried, water thoroughly and allow excess water to drain into the saucer. Pour the collected water away afterward. As dry leaves appear, remove them, and turn the planter from time to time so the plants get light from different directions.

Common questions about living displays

Is a planter without drainage possible?

It can be used, but water may collect around the roots. Choosing a planter with holes is the easier option.

How can I tell when watering is needed?

There is no single timetable that suits every arrangement. Feel or check the soil and water once it has dried. How quickly it dries depends on light, temperature, and the container.

Can cut flowers share the centerpiece?

They can be included, but put them in a separate small vessel of water beside the planter. Do not push their wet stems into the succulent mix.

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