

# Real Estate

## GREEN HOUSE

### Savour the perennial charm

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Crassula, a South African genus, contains a number of succulent species that vary greatly in size, shape and colour. Crassula arborescens, portulacea, ovata and lactea form oval to roundish leaves and look like miniature trees. These are collectively known as jade plants. Crassula are prone to mealy bugs and the best treatment to dislodge them is to hose them with a steady stream of water or alternatively add about 3 ml of liquid soap per litre of water and spray on plants.



### 'Morgan's Beauty'



Crassula 'Morgan's Beauty' as the name suggests is among the most attractive succulent hybrids created with South African Crassula falcata and Crassula mesembryanthemopsi, as it combines the best features of both the parents. It is a small compact plant with a number of rosettes that give it a majestic appearance. During growth period pink stem less flowers emerge and form tufts which directly sit at the centre of the rosettes. The unique feature which makes it a must in all gardens is that it bears stunning flowers which last for about 2-3 weeks. The beauty of thick silver green leaves is further enhanced with a natural makeup of white powder.

The plant grows well in filtered sunlight with porous compost and needs to be fertilised with NPK twice in a growing season.

This plant, if grown well, has the capability to become the centre of attraction of any garden even if it is not in flowering stage.

It can be propagated easily by leaf cuttings or part of leaf cuttings or by planting offsets. The leaves become marked with age, giving an indication that a fresh healthy plant needs to be propagated.

## Growing tips

- Grows well in the morning or evening sun.
- During winters you can reduce watering, but do not allow plants to dry out completely.

## Crassula arborescens

Crassula arborescens is grown for its ornamental thick, fleshy and roundish leaves decorated with red margins. The plant should be grown in cactus compost for good health and be kept in full sun for its beautification with fine-line reddening of the leaf margins. It is an ever green succulent plant with a shallow root system.



Though it is perennial, sometimes the leaves tend to fall off due to over or under watering. In such a case it is always better to re-pot the plant after examining the roots for mealy bugs. It has an impressive fleshy and jointed trunk bearing a number of branches to give it a tree-like appearance which makes it a popular choice in the succulent bonsai arena. It responds well to lose wiring and with some training and styling, it can be crafted into a good succulent bonsai within a short span of time. A six-inch pot is suitable for its growth before it is transplanted into a bonsai tray. To encourage stronger lower growth, new growth should be pinched periodically.

This plant is a gardener's delight as it is capable of tolerating winter as well as summer temperatures in north India equally well. Unlike most of the other plants, it looks beautiful throughout the year due to its succulent leaves. It is a hardy plant which grows well even if it is not watered properly.

For overall robust growth, the plant should be fertilised with NPK (nitrogen, potash and phosphorous) in equal proportion once in growing season. In habitat it reaches up to 10 ft in height and bears white to light pink flowers, but in pot culture it restricts to about 2 ft in height and seldom blooms. It is easy to multiply plants as these respond well to stem cuttings taken from the joints.

## Tips for healthy plants

- Grow in full sun for compact growth of leaves and their colouration in the margins.
- Prune fresh leaves to get better lower growth.
- Don't allow the plant to get completely dry.
- Re-pot once in two years.
- Fertilise with NPK once in growing season.

— *The writer is the President of Cactus and Succulent Society of India.*