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Sedums — Stars in the Fall and Winter Garden



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Written by Carole McCray
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Often referred to as succulents because of their thick, moisture-retentive leaves, sedums are actually desert plants. The tiny, abundant, star-shaped flowers appear in the summer. Later toward fall, the clustered flower heads can turn a warm brown. These form the seedpods and are especially attractive in a winter garden. With the first dusting of snow in my garden, the sedum's flower heads are topped in white. It is such a pretty sight, and the sedum provides texture and shape on my austere winter landscape.

There are over 400 varieties of sedums. The genus Sedum is native mainly to rocky, mountainous regions of the Northern Hemisphere. Because of where they originate, they are often referred to as "stonecrops".



Most sedums will do just fine as far as adapting to the climate in zones 4 to 9. Planted in full sun or partial shade and well-drained soil, sedums will fit into many places in your landscape. As a ground cover, edging a border, carpeting a sloping bank, nestled into a stone wall crevice, trailing in a window box or container or filling spaces in a rock garden; these are some of the numerous roles you might find sedum can play year-round in your garden. In summer, the palette of flowers on sedums can be pale pink, dusty pink, rosy pink, pinkish-red, mauve, white and yellow.

A lovely ground cover is sedum acre 'Golden Stonecrop, a wonderful golden sedum. Yellow flowers appear in spring and summer atop green succulent like foliage resembling moss. Another one to carpet the garden is Sedum spurium with a growth habit of 3 inches high. It forms a low, spreading mat of dense green foliage covered later in the summer with pink flowers topping the carpet. Both of

these low growers are ideal for filling in a crevice garden with nooks and crannies hugging them, for an interesting planting in rock gardens or for carpeting sloping banks. Two more ground huggers are Sedum album chorticum, sometimes referred to as Baby Tears and growing to a height of 2 inches and Sedum album, also known as Coral carpet sedum with a height of 2-6 inches. In cold weather Baby tear's small, bead-like foliage has a touch of pink and white flowers in the summer. Star-shaped flowers appear in early spring on Coral carpet sedum, and its mat of bright green foliage often is tinged in salmon pink—how pretty would it be trailing from a window box or terra cotta pot! If you are thinking of adding sedums to your fall garden, a good one for stunning seasonal color is Sedum rupestre 'Angelina', a superb ground cover and carpet for a hilly slope. 'Angelina' goes from green to gold to a lovely orange in the fall.



Sedum 'Crystal Pink' - photo courtesy Terra Nova Nurseries

Taller growing sedums are best planted at the edge of a border or walkway where they are able to remain somewhat upright. Reaching heights of about 16 inches, two upright and showy ones to consider are Sedum spectabile 'Crystal Pink' and Sedum spectabile 'Mr. Goodbud'. 'Crystal Pink' is a brand new sedum from Terra Nova Nurseries with the iciest pink heads you'll ever see. Large heads of the softest pink on shorter stems make an awesome combination with blue-leaved grasses or with echinacea. It is an improvement upon the traditional 'Autumn Joy' sedum because the blooms hold together stronger. Butterflies are attracted to it. 'Mr. Goodbud' has gained a lot of popularity among many gardeners. This dusky S. Spectabile has tight foliage and strongly contrasting colors between its light buds and dark mauve flowers. In 2006, it won the Royal Horticulture Society's Award of Merit.

With a wide range of habit, color and eye-catching foliage, the choices of sedums are many. They will delight you year-round, some as early as spring when flowers appear and continue through summer till fall and lend textural

interest to your winter garden. Give these garden showstoppers a try.

Carole McCray is an award-winning garden and lifestyle writer and artist who lives, writes gardens and paints in the scenic Laurel Highlands in southwestern Pennsylvania. She won the 2003 Garden Writers Award of Achievement for her article on Native Seeds published in The Christian Science Monitor Newspaper. You can read Carole's profile at www.theMulch.com/laurelmt



Sedum 'Mr. Goodbud' - photo courtesy Terra Nova Nurseries

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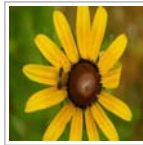
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