



See them Sedums Dianne and Gary Westlake

We like sedums. Well, one of us likes some sedums more than others. Gary thinks 'Frosty Morn' is more fitting for the compost but Dianne just loves it. The issue is that later in the season, 'Frosty Morn' has a tendency to flop over and when it flops onto the lawn, it can become lawnmower fodder.

Sedums come in a variety of heights. Some are 18 to 24 inches tall while some are short so they can be used as ground cover or miniature specimens.

All sedums like as much sun as possible but will tolerate a bit of shade. In the shade, the colour is not as bright and they tend to be a bit leggy.

They also are happy in dry conditions, but they do need a bit of water. We have a very dry area under the eaves, where the soil is like powder. We decided to try sedums in this spot but it turns out that it was too dry for even them.

Sedums often look good with a stone mulch.

After the short sedums flower, we cut the flowers off because they usually are unsightly and hide the foliage. We usually leave the tall ones up for the winter for the birds and to provide interesting shapes in the snow. We cut some in the fall, hang them upside down to dry and spray paint them red for our winter containers outside.

Sedums are great in scree gardens. A scree is easy to create. Just find an area that will drain well or make a hill in the garden. You need about a foot deep of pea gravel with no soil. Enough soil will be introduced at planting and blown or washed in for them to get nutrients.

Sedums work very well in troughs as well and it means you can have a garden on a balcony without worrying about watering too much. The smallest varieties work best because of the scale. You don't have to buy an expensive stone trough because you can make one out of hypertufa or even a painted Styrofoam fish box. You need to make sure the trough has good drainage by putting several holes in the bottom. The soil should have plenty of coarse sand or gravel mixed in to improve drainage.

Many of the tall sedums have a tendency to flop over and even more so this year with all the rain that we have had. Some of them flop more than others. 'Autumn Joy' is one of the best at staying upright.

There are things you can do about the flopping problem. You can surround the sedums with other plants that will grow up around them and help support them later in the summer. You can surround them with a ring like you would some of the large flowered peonies. One of the best ways is to cut the stems by one-half in the spring or early summer after they have come up about 10 inches. This will make them branch and make the plant sturdier and less lanky. As with other sedums, you can just plunk the cut ends into the ground and they will root making new plants. They can also be propagated in spring by lifting the clump and dividing.

The taller sedums come in a variety of colours. From the darker colours like 'Matrona' or 'Purple Emperor' to the variegated greens like 'Mediovariegatum'. The flowers that usually start green and are showy through much of the summer, turn to red, pink or white in the fall or late summer. We have even seen hedges made from the tall sedums and they looked great.

There is more variety in the low growing forms of sedums. As ground covers, as rock garden plants, or in troughs, they have no equal. They are also dead simple to look after. They are for the most part succulents so they do well in dry conditions.

One of our favourites is *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina'. In the spring it forms a low mat of bright almost orange foliage which turns to a greenish yellow later in the season. You have to remind this one who is boss sometimes, because it easily expands by pieces falling off and rooting.

There is even one very small one *Sedum dasyphyllum* that has leaves that look like tiny pebbles. You just have to look at them sideways and the leaves fall off making more plants.

There are mat forming red ones like 'Dragon's Blood', yellow flowering ones like *Sedum spathulifolium* 'Cape Blanco', and white flowering ones like *Sedum album* 'Coral Carpet'.

There are so many varieties of easy-to-grow sedums available for you to try. There is one for every taste and situation.

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