

Sedums

With Jan Enderle, CCNP Advanced

Diversity is the spice of life. That being so, the genus *Sedum*, with around 600 species, can spice up the garden with one of the most diverse palettes in the perennial world. Pick from mat-forming ground covers to four foot tall perennials. From evergreens to winter dormant perennials, Sedums faithfully perform in the garden, changing color and form from season to season.

Sedums, commonly called Stonecrop, are hardy succulents in the family Crassulaceae. They are so varied that botanists have reclassified one of the many subgroups into a separate genus called *Hylotelephium*. Here at Orchard Nursery we have 112 Sedums and *Hylotelephiums* in our data base and are always on the lookout for more varieties. We love them! You will too when you try them and see how easy they are to grow.

The *Hylotelephiums* are generally taller, up to 3-4 feet tall and wide, and like to grow in more sun than shade. They are winter dormant, making them very cold tolerant, and come up faithfully early in the spring year after year. The early rosettes of leaves are almost as beautiful as the blooms. By the end of summer, *Hylotelephiums* have spectacular bloom clusters that usually change to different hues as they age into fall.

There are so many great varieties I have a hard time knowing where to start and stop! Here are some of our favorites.

Look for *H.* ‘Autumn Joy’ and the new improved variety *H.* ‘Autumn Fire’. They will reach 2-3 feet high before blooming with deep antique-pink flowers in broad clusters in late summer. *H. alboroseum* ‘Medio-variegatum’ stands 2-3 feet with such beautiful golden variegated foliage that who cares if it blooms! (but it does – with soft pink clusters in summer.)

H. ‘Ruby Glow’, *H.* ‘October Daphne’, and *H.* ‘Vera Jameson’ spread and spill. ‘Ruby Glow’ being the largest, its blue-gray foliage spreads to over 2 feet in my garden and blooms late summer with deep pink clusters that age to ruby red. ‘October Daphne’ with silvery leaves tipped with red and ‘Vera Jameson’, with dark purple gray leaves, both spread only one foot and are grown for their colorful foliage but also bloom a beautiful pink in late summer. .

Then there are the ground covers. Evergreen varieties include *Sedum* ‘Blue Carpet’ and ‘Angelina.’ Both have pointed awl-shaped leaves and spectacular foliage color, silver-blue and bright golden yellow, respectively. *Sedum* *spathifolium* has small spoon-shaped leaves and likes a bit of shade. *S.* ‘Cape Blanco’ in silvery white and *S.* ‘Carnea’ in red-purple. Both are native to California. *S. spurium* comes in many forms. Best known is *S.* ‘Dragon’s Blood’ with red tinged leaves and red flowers and *S.* ‘Tri Color’ with variegated white, green and pink leaves and pink flowers. The bronze-tinged leaves of *S. tetractinum* spread tightly to the ground. In early summer, its bright yellow blooms contrast beautifully with the foliage making it a great “spiller” out of a pot.

Try a sedum with “black” tinged foliage for drama. *S. album* ‘Nigrum’ with pinkish-white blooms, *S.* ‘Twinkle Purple’ with yellow blooms or *S. plytrichoides* ‘Chocolate Ball’ looks just like *S.* ‘Angelina’ only chocolate colored!

How about some Pork & Beans? The ‘bean’ shaped leaves of *Sedum rubrotinctum* and *S. rubrotinctum* ‘Aurora’ will root and grow if they break off and land on the soil. *Rubrotinctum* literally means ‘red-tinged’ and the dark green leaves definitely live up to their name. *S. r.* ‘Aurora’ is light green with tones of pink giving it a beautiful pearlescens. Both add great texture and color to garden edges and container plantings.

Spice up your garden this year with a sprinkling of Sedums. There are so many more that I haven’t mentioned! Look for them throughout the year. Ground cover types are available in cell packs and four

inch pots, larger growing varieties are available in four inch pots and one or five gallon cans.