

ADENIUM CULTURE IN HOT, ARID CLIMATES

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The CAM Plant



Mark A. Dimmitt
Adenium hybridizer
Tucson, AZ USA

Adeniums are **easy to grow IF** you pay attention to their few basic needs. Those needs are: They **LOVE** sun, heat, and water (together); and **HATE** being cold and wet. Cold + wet = root rot for most species and some hybrids.

LIGHT Give them filtered sun to nearly full sun spring through fall. Mature plants can adapt to full desert sun, but there is a risk of sunburn if plants are moved abruptly. The ideal situation is full sun in the morning and filtered sun in the afternoon; or under 30-50% shade cloth all day.

TEMPERATURE Adeniums are native to the arid tropics and love heat. They need days above 80 F (27 C) and nights above 50 F (10 C) to be healthy; warmer is even better. In the winter most adeniums will tolerate near-freezing nights **IF** the medium is dry. They bear cold nights better if days are hot, such as in a greenhouse; a sunny window indoors is okay too.

HUMIDITY Adeniums do well in dry desert air. However, the most vigorous vegetative growth occurs with moderate to high humidity.

WATERING During hot weather it is nearly impossible to overwater a potbound adenium in well-drained medium. Even daily watering is good if you want fast growth. On the other hand, they can adapt to weekly summer watering, or even less for big plants in large pots.

FEEDING Feed regularly (at least monthly) during the growing season with any complete fertilizer. Use one-quarter to half the recommended strength to avoid leggy, weak stems. It is advisable to top dress with fine limestone or gypsum twice a year to provide calcium for sturdy growth.

POTTING MEDIUM Any fast-draining mix with both organic and inorganic ingredients is good. Water should soak in in a few seconds.

POTS Choose a pot that matches the root system. Shallow-rooted plants should be in shallow pots. Repot early in the season so that roots will fill the pot by winter. Overpotting results in soggy medium and likely root rot.

SEASONAL CYCLE If grown under tropical conditions year round, i.e., overwintered in a warm, bright location, *Adenium "obesum"* and most hybrids are evergreen. However, growth nearly stops during winter. The other species will shed most or all of their leaves and become completely dormant for at least a month or two in winter. If they are overwintered in a cool location, all adeniums will become dormant (perhaps retaining some or all leaves) when nights are consistently below 50 F (10 C). In this case they must be kept dry; bone dry if they are leafless.

Adenium species and hybrids are very individualistic about flowering habits. However, the majority of plants on the market flower mainly during fall through spring in tropical conditions, and little or none in midsummer when they put on most of their vegetative growth. Plants that are stored in a cool or dark location will lose the winter flowering season. The best cultivars flower profusely nearly year round, while most have a peak of two to four months.

Adeniums are also individualistic about dormancy. Even the same plant may go dormant one winter and remain active through another. If in the autumn most or all of the leaves suddenly turn yellow and fall off, this is a sign that the plant needs to rest. Reduce or curtail water immediately, and keep the medium dry until the plant begins to leaf out again in warm weather. Smaller plants may need occasional light watering to keep the stems from shriveling.