

Desert Plants

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What types of plants live in the desert?
- 2) How have plants adapted to dry conditions?
- 3) How do desert plants ensure their survival?
- 4) What features do desert plants have in common?

How do you think plants have adapted to a dry climate?



Some plants have very thin leaves, like this spinifex grass. The smaller surface area means that less moisture will be transpired, allowing the plant to survive until the next time it rains.





Many plants have spiky spines on them. The spikes help protect them against predators who would otherwise eat them.





Retaining Moisture

Plants absorb moisture through their roots and lose moisture from their leaves.

Some desert plants have leaves with a waxy protective surface which helps prevent loss of moisture.

Some plants have very small leaves. Smaller leaves means that there is less surface area facing the sun, therefore less moisture will be lost.

Some plants can curl their leaves over to reduce surface area exposed to the sun, thus reducing moisture loss.

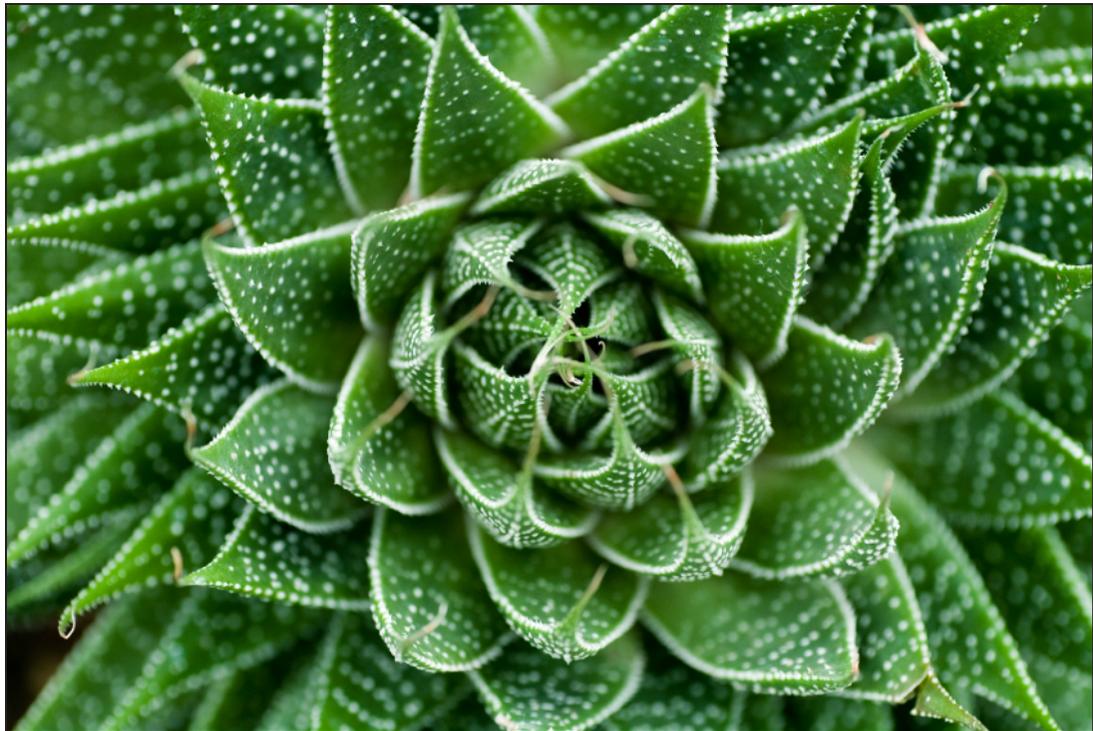


Retaining Moisture

Succulents are plants that retain moisture inside their leaves. They absorb moisture from dew, or from rain when it falls, and use this moisture to sustain themselves through long dry periods.

The leaves and stems of succulents are usually thick and fleshy. Sometimes they have spiky ends to protect themselves against predators.

There is a wide range of succulent plants. They come in different shapes and sizes and are popular ornamental plants for many home gardeners.



Surviving the Desert

Many desert plants lie dormant during long spells of dry weather. However, when it does rain, they will bloom. Seeds will germinate and begin to grow while they still have access to precious moisture. The desert comes alive after the rains!

This is one adaptation that plants have developed to ensure their survival in such a harsh environment.

