

Stapelia and Huernia: How to Grow

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Q: My Stapelia and Huernia are firm and well-rooted but they aren't growing at all. They don't bloom for me, either. The stems are red. I have them in small clay pots in 50% pumice and 50% potting soil, and water them once every week.

A: These are members of family Apocynaceae, which now includes their former home Asclepiadaceae, the milkweed family. The whole family grows during warm weather when happy. The two genera you mentioned tend to grow under shrubs in habitat, protected from the hot sun, and are bright green in nature. They are accustomed to water during the warm season and almost none during the cool season.

Red stems mean they are getting too much sun. Put them under larger plants or on a lower shelf. They can use lots of water during the hot season so long as they are growing well. Water them before they become completely dry or they will stop growing for a while. They will grow and bloom better if fertilized heavily.

If they are being watered enough and still aren't growing, they probably have mealybugs at the roots. Treat the plant with pesticides; alcohol doesn't work on these plants, in which mealies hide in tiny cracks. I now put imidacloprid in the soil of all my ascleps. I buy it as Bayer Grub Granules.