

Plant Fall Seeds Now

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Warm days, cool nights are perfect for cool season mesembs and winter bulbs. Try just one pot this year or, try dozens. Now's the time for *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Freesia*, *Gladiolus*, *Lachenalis*, *Lampranthus*, *Lithops*, *Massonia*, *Mitrophyllum*...

Use 20 ounce foam cups: cooler during hot summer dormancy, the deeper cup dries slower. Write the name on the rim with a ballpoint. Use a knife or chopstick to poke in bottom holes. Add soil to one inch below the rim. I use 50/50 desert soil to perlite, never organic stuff. Drop seeds; shake the cup about 10 seconds to settle. Sprinkle one layer of small gravel. Spritz with a gentle spray, and then stand cups in trays of water.

Seeds won't sprout unless soil remains glistening wet. Once up, babies can't tolerate dry soil at all. If you can water twice per day, you won't need the trays. I don't have that kind of time. I stand cups in water for weeks on end, emptying and refilling trays to prevent mosquitoes. Spritz gently (a Fogg-It Nozzle works great) or watch plants go flying or, soak from the bottom. Once up, use quarter strength fertilizer every week at least.

Cover with light shade clothe unless you like feeding birds. Mesemb seedlings are frost tolerant under this. Order seeds from Mesa Garden, www.mesagarden.com or send two stamps for a list to P.O. Box 72, Belen NM 87002. Also try silverseeds.co.za. Tell 'em Leo sent ya.