

SEMPERVIVUMS

Sempervivums, or 'House Leeks' as they are commonly known, are members of the Crassula family. Their natural habitat includes the mountains of Europe as well as parts of Asia and Africa.

Most of the plants seen offered are attractively coloured cultivars. A carefully selected mixture of red, brown and green plants can make a most impressive display in an alpine trough or in a rock garden.



Sempervivums growing in an alpine trough.

The formation of flower spikes, with their pink or yellow flowers, look attractive but sadly they result in the death of the rosettes from which they are produced. However these plants freely produce offsets which can be easily used for propagation.

Cultivation / Plantcare

Because Sempervivums come from high altitude habitats most are hardy and will survive outdoors in the UK provided they are given suitable growing conditions.

Watering

Regular watering throughout the year is required for plants grown under cover where they are sheltered from rain. Plants grown outdoors can - except during lengthy periods of drought - be ignored as they will be watered naturally by rainfall. An occasional application of weak fertiliser can be applied, but Sempervivums are undemanding and if planted outside will usually grow happily without it.

Position

If grown indoors they must be given a bright position with some sunshine. Plants grown outdoors should be grown in a sunny spot to enhance their attractive coloration. Probably the most important consideration is drainage, a sloping rockery or a well drained alpine trough are ideal. They can also be grown in crevices on walls.

Temperature

Provided the plants are grown in a well drained, and preferably sunny, location most "Semps" will survive freezing temperatures without difficulty, though it is important that their roots are protected. They should not be left outside in thin plastic pots during the winter months.



Sempervivums re-appearing as snow melts.

Compost

A very free draining, extremely gritty compost is recommended. Indeed almost pure grit with just a trace humus is ideal. Topdress the area around each plant with pure grit - this will help protect the rosettes from excess moisture in the compost.



Acknowledgement

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