



ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Care of *Adenium* in a Desert Climate (Impala Lily, Karoo Rose, Desert Rose)

This native of arid Africa is quite easy to grow if one is willing to give it proper care. Briefly, it thrives on sun and heat, and it abhors dark, cold, or wet conditions.



SUN: *Adeniums* adapt to full desert sun when mature and if adjusted to it gradually. Most species perform better in light afternoon shade, as under an unirrigated mesquite. Or grow under 30-50% shade cloth. *Adenium swazicum* and its hybrids (X Arizona) tolerate full desert sun better than do *A. obesum* and *A. multiflorum*.



TEMPERATURE: They grow best when days are in the 80's and 90's °F. Okay to near freezing **IF** kept bone dry when nights are below 50°F. It's safer to keep them indoors in winter. Sustained temperatures over 100°F seem to retard growth and flowering.



WATERING: These plants will grow vigorously on generous watering during hot weather (90's °F and above). However, it is very important not to keep the soil soggy. Water infrequently (but always thoroughly) during cooler weather; and its best not to water at all when the nights are consistently below 50°F. Also withhold water completely when dormant (leafless), even if this lasts several months.

FEEDING: When in growth, feed with any balanced complete fertilizer with micronutrients once or twice a month. Or use slow release fertilizer as directed on the package.



POTTING: Good drainage is essential. A good mix is 1 to 2 parts pumice or perlite to 1 part potting mix (humus) such as Ball™ or Sunshine™ Mix. Potbound plants grow slowly; keep potting up if you want a larger plant. The massive roots tend to break pots anyway, so you may have no choice.



SHAPING: Some plants branch naturally at a small size, others try to become trees. You can induce branching simply by cutting off the top of a stem at any height. The best time is early summer when new growth will be vigorous.

GROWTH AND FLOWERING HABITS are extremely variable among species and individuals. Nearly all plants will become dormant part of the year. The leaves suddenly turn yellow and fall off. This may occur at almost any time, but usually between late autumn and early spring. The dormancy may last from a few weeks to as much as 6 months. Some plants flower only a couple of months a year, whereas the best clones almost never stop blooming. Learn to recognize your plants' natural cycles. There are some general patterns within each species:

-*Adenium obesum* var. *obesum* has a brief dormancy under greenhouse conditions, but cold or dry conditions will prolong it. This species is highly variable in growth habit and flowering season. The flowers are pale pink to deep red at the edges, fading to white in the throat. There are usually no nectar guides (red lines in the throat).

-*A. multiflorum* has a long fall-winter dormancy, even under greenhouse conditions. It flowers profusely for about 2 months at the end of winter before growing new leaves; never at other times. The flowers are white with a narrow, red edge on the petals and prominent nectar guides. This species has very broad leaves.

-*A. swazicum* has a brief late winter dormancy in the greenhouse, but adapts to a long one if kept cool in winter. It may bloom sporadically at any season; the best clones are nearly everblooming. The flowers are uniform color all the way into the throat, usually light pink; the throat has no nectar guides. This species has narrow leaves which tend to fold upwards along the midrib. The plants tend to have weak stems; they rarely are upright.

-*A. somalense* usually has prominent, light-colored veins on the narrow leaves. This species varies between two extremes: plants with massive caudexes to several feet tall through *A. obesum*-like shrubs with subterranean swollen roots and skinny stems (the latter is offered as variety *crispum*). The flowers are smaller with narrower petals than those of *A. obesum*; they have pink to red edges fading to white throats with very prominent nectar guides that often extend out onto the petals. They will stay in leaf most of the year if kept warm and watered.

-*A. oleifolium* is a dwarf species with a large, underground root and few, weak stems. The very small flowers are uniform pink. There is a long winter dormancy.

-*A. boehmianum* resembles *A. swazicum*, differing in having erect stems, very broad leaves, and smaller solid pink flowers. It is in leaf only for a few months in summer, when it also flowers.

-*A. arabicum* and *A. socotranum* are not available in the horticultural trade, except that the cultivar '**Singapore**', which is the same as *A. obesum* var. *coetatum*, is apparently actually a form of *A. arabicum*.

-'**Arabian Ruby**' is a hybrid between *A. obesum* 'Black Ruby' and *A. arabicum* 'Shada' form. It is a vigorous erect-growing plant, forming a giant trunk. Large, light red flowers are borne year-round if kept warm.

-**Adenium X Arizona** is a hybrid between *A. obesum* and *A. swazicum*. The plants are as variable as the parent species, but there seems to be no noticeable dormancy. The flowers are uniform in color and range from pink to blood red; the best clones are everblooming: '**Endless Sunset**' is pink; '**Crimson Star**' and '**Volcanic Sunset**' are bright red.

-'**Amiability**' is another superb red, bred in the late 1990s. The gigantic flowers usually have a narrow black edge, which is absent during really hot weather. The plants are unusually sturdy and thick-stemmed. Flowers are borne nearly year round, with peaks in spring and fall.

-'**Home Run**' was created in Taiwan in 1998, and remains the finest red Adenium flower in the world. Except during the hottest days of summer, the large, round flowers are bright red with a heavy black netting on the outer halves of the petals. Heaviest bloom is in spring, with some flowers nearly all year. The Chinese name is "**Hon Bu Zhan**", which sounds like "home run" in English; the name means "better than red".

-'**Winter Remedy**' (*A. multiflorum* 'MAD #1' X *A. swazicum* 'Perpetual Pink'). The huge purple and white flowers are borne in profusion from late fall to the end of winter. A Mark Dimmitt cross.