

Mammillaria

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Q: How do I keep my Mammillaria from rotting when it's really hot?

A: Most Mams do better if they dry out rapidly after watering during the heat of the summer. If you keep them wet during the heat and humidity, they rot fast. During our periods of cool nights and warm days (effectively, most of October through most of December and mid January through March) they grow like weeds and you can water a lot more.

Grow them in smallish pots with soil that wets easily and dries fast. I've never been happy with any quantity of peat or ground bark in my mammillaria mixtures, so I use pure mineral soil from a local streambed. The exception would be plants native to high-organic soils, like *M. hernandezii*.

The ones from Baja California (*M. schumannii* and the subgenus *Cochemeia*, including *M. pondii*, *M. setispina*) and the Sonoran desert (including our local *M. grahamii*, formerly *M. microcarpa*) are accustomed to rain at any time of the year. They are much more tolerant of summer watering. In fact, *M. schumannii* and *M. microcarpa* bloom about a week after each good soaking when it's warm.