Sedum is a very large genus of Crassulaceae with over 400 species. These are distributed principally in the northern hemisphere in North America and Eurasia with just a few outliers in South America and Africa. There are no sedums native to Australia or New Zealand. For the collector, the greatest concentration of desirable non-hardy, frost-sensitive species is found in Mexico, home to around 100 species. These exhibit wide diversity, ranging from small creeping plants known as stonecrops which are typical of the genus, to large atypical very woody shrubs, 3 m or more tall. All these species are frost-sensitive and so in areas subject to low temperatures they must be provided with winter protection but a cool, frost-free greenhouse is all they require if they are kept dry during the winter. Many are ideal for outdoor plantings in the spring and summer, especially those that make attractive subjects for hanging pots.

Here just a small selection is showcased to illustrate the range of diversity across Mexican sedums. For those wanting more information on sedums in general or Mexican species in particular, the book by Horvath (2014), the most recent of several books on the genus, is highly recommended.

Fig. 1 Sedum adolphi.
**Sedum adolphi**

This is a woody plant with stems that, in time, can grow up to 40 cm long thus making it an ideal plant for a hanging pot (Fig. 1). Indeed I hang a few specimen pots from tree branches in the garden when the danger from frost is past. It branches freely from the base and is a relatively fast grower. When well grown only the bases of the stems are bare of the pale green leaves. I have grown this plant for over 30 years and in my experience it is a very shy-flowerer but when it does oblige the flowers are creamy-white and are produced at the stem tips. This species is often encountered under the name *Sedum nussbaumerianum* which is now considered to be a synonym. The name *adolphi* commemorates Prof. H.G. Adolf Engler (1844–1930), a famous German botanist from Berlin.

**Sedum allantoides**

This species has sausage-shaped leaves which account for its name (Fig. 2), this being a very distinct feature that cannot be confused with any other Mexican *Sedum*. Its stems are erect, modestly branched from base and bear the pale, almost white, glaucous leaves that are blunt and terete (circular in cross-section). Its stems elongate to form the inflorescences bearing white flowers. This is one of the most frost-sensitive of the Mexican sedums, so slightly higher winter temperatures are recommended to avoid damage to the plant. A cultivar of *S. allantoides* has flatter leaves and overall the plant is more sprawling and less erect. This was first described as *Graptopetalum goldii*, named in honour of a famous New Zealand cactus collector and writer, Dr. Peter Goldie. This was named in honour of a famous New Zealand cactus collector and writer, Dr. Peter Goldie.
of Dudley Gold of the Mexican Cactus & Succulent Society. However, more recent study has shown that this plant is not a *Graptopetalum* but merely a form of *S. allantoides*. It is thus better considered as a cultivar, so now it has the name *S. allantoides* ‘Goldii’ (Fig. 3).

**Sedum burrito**

The species name is derived from burro and means ‘donkey’s tail’ but it has the common name of ‘Baby Burro’s Tail’. This is because it is a smaller, more compact version of the better-known *Sedum morganianum* and could be confused with this species but not others. Its pendent stems (Fig. 4) are up to 50 cm long, branching from the base, making it perfect for a hanging pot or basket. Unlike *S. morganianum* it does not easily shed its leaves, which are spirally arranged and when well grown usually hide the stem completely. This plant grows well outdoors in hanging baskets in the UK in the spring and summer and does not suffer from heavy rains if given a free draining compost. As a consequence of its many attractive features, *S. burrito* has become a very popular plant in North America and Europe.
**Sedum furfuraceum**

This is a typical stonecrop with a low-growing, creeping habit making it an ideal subject for display in a bonsai pot (Fig. 5). I’m proud of this particular container because I made it at a bonsai pot making class, so it is truly one of a kind! Another feature making this mode of display suitable is that the plant is relatively slow-growing but in time it develops a low bushy appearance. The stems of *S. furfuraceum* are relatively thick and irregularly, tortuously branched. Its leaves though are unique: they are the shape of small eggs, dark green in colour suffused with red or purple especially if grown in strong light, whilst the surface is covered with a thick waxy layer that splits into small scales that remain attached. The name *furfuraceum* means ‘covered in bran-like scales’ and hence is rather appropriate. Its white flowers are produced at the branch tips. A close relative appears to be *Sedum hernandezii* which is like *S. furfuraceum* but is all round a larger and faster-growing plant, still with the scaly surface but the leaves are just bright green with the waxy coating of larger scales. Flowers also differ in being yellow.

**Sedum lucidum**

This is a woody species that has basally well-branched sprawling stems up to 45 cm long that are either erect or as in my largest specimen (Fig. 6) sprawling to pendulous. The leaves are very
fleshy, oval in cross section, slightly flattened on the upper surface and more rounded on the lower surface, slightly pointed at the tips, lustrous green tinged with red (lucidus means ‘shining’) (Fig. 7). My plant (ISI 1497) is a handsome form collected by Alfred Lau in 1971 on north facing granite outcrops south of Acultzingo, Veracruz, Mexico. I named this clone ‘Obese’ for its fattish leaves (Walker, 2021). The inflorescences of this plant are always produced at the stem tips. They form dense hemispherical heads up to 6 cm across with more than 30 flowers which are typical of Sedum: flattened, star-like with 5 (but sometimes 6) white petals.

**Sedum oxypetalum**

This is one of just five species that are known as ‘Mexican tree sedums’, although more accurately they are better described as large shrubs, the largest of which (*Sedum dendroideum*) can grow up to 5 m tall. *Sedum oxypetalum* is smaller growing, forming stems up to 1 m tall, 10 cm diameter at the base and well branched above. Even without any training or pruning plants naturally look like miniature trees, making them ideal subjects for display as bonsai specimens (Fig. 8). The stems produce light brown peeling bark which enhances the appearance.

**Fig. 7.** Close-up of *S. lucidum* ‘Obese’.

**Fig. 8.** *Sedum oxypetalum*, 50 cm tall in a 20 cm long bonsai pot.

Plants are naturally deciduous and hence are leafless during the winter resting period. The finely papillose (bearing small papillae), pointed green leaves up to 5 cm long are produced in large numbers at the stem tips in
the spring which grow to become new branches. These branches later elongate to develop into the insignificantly-sized inflorescences – considering the size of the plant – bearing whitish-pink flowers in small numbers. The petals are sharply pointed as indicated by the name *oxypetalum*. After the flowers fade the ends of the branches die and fall away unless fruit is produced. Eventually in the autumn the plant becomes completely leafless. The closest relative of this species is *Sedum frutescens*, which has a similar growth form but its branches are not deciduous after flowering and the flowers are white not pink; its leaves are also narrower. Both these species have a unique growth form in the genus making them desirable in any collection of succulents.

*Sedum perezdelarosae*

This species was newly described as recently as 2012 so it is as yet relatively uncommon in cultivation. It is a carpet-forming plant that readily produces offsets so it is perfect for display in a bonsai pot (Fig. 9). It forms tight rosettes up to 3 cm diameter and most are much smaller than this, each consisting of glaucous-blue leaves with darker pointed tips. It produces offsets that elongate to form flowering shoots which have yellow flowers. However, this plant does not really look like a true *Sedum* but has the appearance more like that of an *Echeveria*, so is this possibly a hybrid: *Sedum × Echeveria*? The species was named for Jorge A. Perez de la Rosa, a Mexican forestry engineer and secretary of the botanical institute of the University of Guadalajara.
**Sedum ×rubrotinctum**

This is a colourful plant that’s very easy to grow and hence popular in cultivation. It is a hybrid, possibly between *Sedum pachyphyllum* which has silvery-white leaves and *S. stahlii* which has small, jelly-bean shaped brick red leaves. As a result *S. ×rubrotinctum* has leaves that are mostly red – hence the name meaning ‘red coloured’ – with some green, especially in the winter if kept fairly dry (Fig. 10).

Consequently it has the common name of ‘Jelly Bean Plant’. The leaves are spirally arranged and congested at the branch tips. The flowers are yellow although these are not frequently produced. It received an Award of Garden Merit (AGM) from the RHS in 2012. There is also an attractive cultivar ‘Aurora’, named for its glaucous grey leaves with pink hues when grown in full sun.

**Fig. 10. Sedum ×rubrotinctum.**

**References**


* CactusWorld, 39: 300.

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