HENS AND CHICKS

Sempervivum techtorum

Characteristics

- Type: Succulent
- Zone: 3 to 8
- Height: 0.50 to 1.00 feet
- Spread: 0.50 to 1.50 feet
- Bloom Time: June to July
- Bloom Description: Reddish purple
- Sun: Full sun
- Water: Dry to medium
- Maintenance: Low
- Flower: Showy
- Leaf: Evergreen
- Other: Winter Interest
- Tolerate: Deer, Drought, Dry Soil, Shallow-Rocky Soil, Air Pollution

Culture

Easily grown in average, dry to medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun. Tolerates some light shade. Likes sandy or gravelly soils. Tolerates poor soils. Needs sharp soil drainage to perform well. Tolerates some drought. Avoid overwatering. Plants are evergreen. Plants spread by offsets to form colonies. Individual rosettes die after bloom and should be removed from the garden at that time.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Sempervivum tectorum, commonly called house leek (houseleek), is native to the mountains of southern Europe. It is an evergreen, mat-forming succulent that typically forms rosettes (to 4" across) of 50-60 thick glabrous leaves (to 1.5-3" long) that are sometimes purple-tipped. Rosette foliage typically grows to 4" tall. The mother rosette (hen) spreads in all directions by horizontal stems to form offsets (chicks). In summer, leafy, pubescent, upright flowering stalks rise from the hen to as much as 12" tall topped with cymes of red-purple flowers. After the hen flowers, it sets seed and dies leaving the chicks to fill in the space and spread, hence the sometimes used common name of hens and chicks for this plant. Plants are primarily grown in gardens for their attractive and unusual foliage. In Europe, sempervivum was once planted on roofs of houses for a number of reasons, including warding off lightning/fire, holding slates in place or providing emergency salad food (edible leaves as roof leeks) in winter.

Problems

No serious insect or disease problems. Rust, leaf/stem rot and root rot.

Garden Uses

Rock garden, border front, rock crevices, along stone walls, small area ground cover, edging or foundations. Containers. Best when planted in groups or massed as a ground cover.

Courtesy of Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder