

Big Adenium Caudex: 5 Ideas

There are several ways in which you can get the chubby adenium caudex that many growers love. Even though some of the methods may seem like a *torture* to our plants, they actually help promote their growth and strengthen them! Come join us as we begin exploring the different methods right now.

1. Build the Caudex With Nitrogen

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/nitrogen-for-adenium-caudex.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/nitrogen-for-adenium-caudex.jpg)

Nitrogen is the element in making up those amino acids & enzymes in protein chains. It's like the 'protein' for our adenium muscles.

To fatten up the caudex, you could try giving the plants some more nitrogen. Good nitrogen sources are:

- Beans, peas, rye
- Compost or manure
- Chicken feather, neem seeds

To increase the varieties of effective micro-organisms in the soil, Trichoderma fungi or *Bacillus* bacteria might also help. These little guys 'fix' the nitrogen, making it much easier for the plants to digest. The absorption time is around 2-3 weeks. So you may space out the feeding accordingly.

If you use chemical fertilizers, be careful as these tend to have a heating property. Because chemical fertilizers react immediately instead of slowly releasing over time like organic fertilizers. It might burn your plants if overused. Dilute the fertilizer for the best application. Around 200 grams would be enough for a medium plant.

Early morning or late evening are good times for feeding. But don't feed too much in the rainy season. There's a lot of free nitrogen in the air when it rains so we don't need to do the hard work.

Good Nitrogen Feed:

<https://amzn.to/2VtVYEh>

There's a good recipe for EM1 (effective micro-organisms, an organic fertilizer for plants) if you'd like a look: 'How to make EM1 Effective Micro-organism at home' <https://zenyrgarden.com/how-to-make-em1-effective-microorganism/>

The next thing you can do for big adenium branches is:

2. Prune the Branches

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/cut-off-branches-adenium.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/cut-off-branches-adenium.jpg)

Pruning the branches can help us with getting a larger caudex. Because firstly it's for the visual proportion. When the branches are too long and high, we may visually get an idea of the caudex not being too chubby. When they are pruned shorter, we may see the caudex as being thicker or fatter.

When we cut off the branches, the plants may *think* that they are under attack. Therefore, to prepare themselves for the next "just-in-case", they size up their caudex—where most of the water & water-soluble nutrients are stored.

When we cut the branches, some sap will flow out. Rubbing alcohol can help remove this latex. An Inox knife also works well. Or better yet, a super ninja [Japanese garden knife](#).

These two tools might come in handy for our "enlarging" job as you shall see when we continue to:

3. Prune the Root

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/prune-adenium-root-caudex.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/prune-adenium-root-caudex.jpg)

After we “hurt” our dear adenium on the top part, now we begin playing with them on the bottom part. Pruning the root can also help us get a fatter caudex naturally. What we do is dig up our plants from the pot. Wash away the soil sticking onto the roots. And we use something sharp to cut some of the roots off.

During this process, we are basically “attacking” our plants and training it into fight mode. The plants might be thinking, “*What’s going on, dude? Where are all my roots going?*”

Because they are not fragile species like a glass of wine, the desert roses will have to adapt to survive by making their caudex 3x or 4x bigger. With a bigger caudex, the plants will be able to store more water and nutrients and be very much prepared even when they lose parts of their roots again.

Hmm. But how about we do a 2-in-1?

4. Prune Root & Defoliate

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/pruned-adenium-plants.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/pruned-adenium-plants.jpg)

Some gardeners even go more extreme by cutting up the roots and chopping off the branches on their plants. Now this is exactly what we mean in the beginning of the post by torture.

If you decide to do this, consider pruning and defoliating your babies after the winter (the dormant period) and before the summer (the hot period). Although we want to strengthen and make our caudex bigger, we don't want to kill our plants.

If you do this when the weather is too cold, the plant won't be able to use the remaining water it has in the caudex, which may lead to root rot. If the weather is too hot, oh well the plant may lose too much water before it can develop a bigger caudex.

So When Is a Good Time to Prune Then?

Around February or before June (not applicable in Australia or countries where the seasons are in a different pattern, but basically after winter and before summer) is a good time to do this depending on your local climate. After cutting off their water in and outlets (i.e. the roots & the leaves), you may put some fungicide, garden lime powder, or cinnamon on the cuts to protect our plants.

Also hang the plants somewhere with shade for 10-15 days. This is the intensive 2-week boot camp training process. After this period, when we re-pot our plants into good soil and give them some nice water, they will *survive and thrive*.

Pruning is also best done after the plants have flowered or the flowers have fallen off naturally. This signals to us that the adenium is going into a new growth cycle. Pruning can give a little speed-up push while still following the natural flow of things. You can see the adenium life cycle in this little drawing below:

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/adenium-life-cycle.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/adenium-life-cycle.jpg)

If you prune the plants too early when it's already climbing up the growing stage (growing leaves but no flowers yet), we may have to go back to square one, that is, back to the growing branches stage. So let it grow & flow along. This way your plants won't get exhausted cycle after cycle. Their caudex can get larger without being exhausted or becoming what some growers call 'unresponsive' (not reacting to nutrients or not getting bigger).

Why Hang the Adenium Plants Upside Down?

When we cut off the root & branches, the nutrient transport system is weaker than usual. It may not have enough energy to pump the good juice up to the top-most parts. Placing them upside down, the flow of the nutrients will easily follow the flow of gravity, helping our plant with just enough to get by this "rough" period.

Finally, to get a bigger adenium caudex, how about we:

5. Choose Species That Naturally Have Fat Caudex

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/grafted-adenium-arabicum-multi-color.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/grafted-adenium-arabicum-multi-color.jpg)

Out of the many adenium species, *Adenium Arabicum* is one that naturally has a large caudex. Even their branches are quite fat. If you don't know yet what Adenium species have what size of caudex, check out the [Adenium Species List](#) (with pictures).

The only downside to the Arabicum specie, however, is that it can grow way too big for many pots to handle—often to the size of, well if we may put it frankly, a small elephant. Their hairy leaves also attract spores and insects, which some gardeners don't really like.

That is why growers cross hybrid species like the Thai Soco Adenium (*Arabicum* x *Golden Crown*).

This one has all the good genes from the Arabicum but doesn't have hairy leaves and doesn't grow a caudex as big as a washing machine.

Golden Crown or Emerald Crown is another good one if you love chubby adenium. If you're into mini or dwarf desert roses, then check out the Dorset Horn Adenium (or DHA) or Adenium Broccoli. They are super cute plants to keep with tiny curly leaves.

Some Last Notes

The issue some growers have is digging the plants up & bringing the caudex above the soil too soon while it's still growing. This may disrupt the growing-bigger process of the caudex & result in a smaller one.

From some grower's experience, the part of the caudex that we let sit under the soil will still grow bigger. From this key point, you can shape the caudex however you see fit.

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/fat-adenium-caudex.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/fat-adenium-caudex.jpg)

For example, if we want the caudex to get fatter about 80% from the roots up, we can wrap the soil up to that point (up to 80%) around the caudex. If you want it to fatten up half way, we can move our soil line down to the mid section.

When the caudex grows to the desirable size, people dig it up & place it above the soil to slow down growth. They do this to shape the caudex to their desired shape or liking.

Growing adenium straight in the ground has given some good results for growers:

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/adenium-caudex-grown-in-ground.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/adenium-caudex-grown-in-ground.jpg)

You can also look at the skin of the adenium to tell. If it's quite gray, it might be mature & will grow slower. If it's a bit green with some cracked lines, then it may be still young & growth will be more vigorous.

Time to Grow Bigger Adenium Caudex

Now you know five of the ways we can get a fat caudex for our adenium naturally. It's not too difficult, right. Even though some methods are easy to implement, you do need a bit patience before the results start showing themselves. With that said, happy gardening and don't forget to show our lovely community your beautiful desert roses. Have a blessed day.

Thanks to:

- [Hoa Su Viet](#)
- [Hong Quan Su Canh Binh Duong](#)
- [Hoa Su Kim Thu Binh Duong](#)

Ideas for Fat & Even Adenium Branches

To match the big caudex and create a nice overall shape, adenium growers would also like fat branches. But sometimes, one branch grows quite big and the other branch grows quite small. How to balance the branches now? Let's see some other ideas on how to make fat, even branches.

The simple trick some growers share is to *prune back the fatter branches*.

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/fat-even-branches-for-adenium.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/fat-even-branches-for-adenium.jpg)

When we prune off the fatter branches, the nutrients then will move towards the slimmer branches. If we let the smaller branches grow, the nutrients will nourish them day by day, bulking them up. And at some point catching up to the size of the once-bigger branches. This makes the overall plant shape more even.

From the other side, we can see another small branch has now caught up with the other big branches on the plant. By pruning the big branches off, we slow their growth down a bit. This gives the smaller ones more time, nutrients & chance to grow while the bigger ones rest & shoot out new branches.

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(08\)/other-small-branch-on-adenium.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(08)/other-small-branch-on-adenium.jpg)

To evenly space the branches, you could nudge a Styrofoam ball or a newspaper ball between them. I hope this is useful.