

How to Save Soft Caudex On Desert Rose Plants

Seeing adenium plants with soft caudex can be quite disappointing for growers. We understand this feeling, but don't worry. It shouldn't feel like a liability. When you understand your babies more, you can help them improve. Let's go through this together with some tips below.

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(22\)/adenium-soft-shrinking-caudex.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(22)/adenium-soft-shrinking-caudex.jpg)

Some Causes for Soft Caudex

1. Suffering From Shipping

Very often, when you buy adenium plants and have them shipped to you, the plants are picked up from the soil & wrapped in newspaper or hay in a bare-roots condition. There is very little sunlight in the box & there may be shock during the shipment.

Soft caudex can especially happen if your desert roses are grafted. Because of this movement shock, the caudex can get soft upon arrival. Or they might turn soft some time after you've planted it.

2. Damage From Dropping

If the desert roses have been accidentally dropped, part of the caudex can get bruised. If you use a finger to poke into it & see some mushy stuff, that part is rotted.

You can see the damage right on the skin of the adenium. It will have a darker color than the rest of the body (similar to a bruise on your knee). Depending on the age & strength of the plants, they may or may not survive this.

3. Dehydration

Although many people say that adenium don't need a lot of water, their bodies can actually get shrunk because of dehydration. If you compare the soft caudex plants with others, you may notice that their size is smaller.

The shrinking is more noticeable during root training period where growers dig the plants up & hang them upside down for about 2 weeks. Dehydration, however, is not root rot. There are cases where some adenium are dry but their roots are still growing.

4. Under Nourishment

By under nourishment, we mean the babies may not be getting enough N, P, K & other micro-nutrients. This may lead to a weak overall nutrient transportation & usage. It can be a reason why the caudex has been softened. The plant may be too weak to have energy to function.

5. Root Fungal Disease

Your plant roots may be under attack from fungi. You can see this by digging up the plants to check. If there are numerous white spots webbing around the root ball, it is a sign that your plants may be suffering from fungal infection.

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(22\)/adenium-root-fungi.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(22)/adenium-root-fungi.jpg)

This may be why the root is weak. With weak roots, water & nutrients may not be pumped up. The plants then may have to suck up the 'back-up' nutrients & water stored in the caudex for surviving. This could lead to a soften caudex.

6. Too Many Little String Roots

Many growers ask a question like this: Why is my adenium caudex soft but the leaves are still green & healthy? The reason for this may be there are too many little string roots. They suck up all the nutrients like little octopus tentacles. The good bits therefore may not reach the upper caudex part, causing it to soften.

You may not see leaves yellowing immediately, but the rot is there. If the leaves start to yellow, that's a sign that things are getting too late. Save it immediately.

7. The Grafted Branches

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(22\)/grafted-branches-adenium-drooping.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(22)/grafted-branches-adenium-drooping.jpg)

Sometimes, when the plants do not have enough water and nutrients to nourish the grafted branches, it may lead to a soften caudex.

You can see this happening when the grafted branches seem to droop downwards. They may not be strong enough to carry the flowers. Soften caudex may also happen when the grafted scions are quite long.

The Basic Idea: Energy Flow in Adenium

This is a very simplified picture of how the energy flows in & out of adenium:

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(22\)/adenium-energy-flow.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(22)/adenium-energy-flow.jpg)

When you get the basic idea, you may make some sense of what's going on to help your plants.

With sunlight, the adenium has energy to pump water & nutrients in from the roots. These "energy money" then get spent out as leaves, branches & beautiful flowers.

When the caudex is soft, it may mean the bottom part is troubled. We can imagine two approaches to this: the top & the bottom.

Many people suggest then that we save this by "spending less" or cutting off the top part. If the bottom part is infected, we need to do some cuttings down there too.

It's recommended that you save the desert rose as soon as you have time. Otherwise, the cost of delay means the plants might be getting weaker; thus, slowing down the recovery process.

Let us show you next how to save a soft caudex:

Save Soft Caudex Adenium: Step by Step

1. Cut Off the Leaves

If your plants currently have leaves, cut them off. Leaves are huge nitrogen consumers.

So by temporarily saying goodbye to them, we can focus the plant's energy to nourish the weak part, that is the caudex.

Leave some of the leaves on for some energy absorption. Your leaves will grow back as the plant recovers.

2. Cut Off Some Branches

Look for branches that have 2-3 smaller branches. Then, cut some small ones off.

After cutting them off, you can use some cinnamon ground or garden lime powder to cover up the cut. This helps fight against bacteria & keep the cut dry.

3. Wave Goodbye to Flowers & Buds

Oh, we're sorry to cut off those beautiful flowers too. But at this time, we may need to do so to prioritize the survival of our tree.

With this done, we're off-loading the "burden" of some potassium & phosphorous eaters on the plant. This helps in case the plant is under-nourished.

4. Snip Off Those Rotted String Roots

At this time, you'd want to keep some big roots. You can dig the plants up to see the roots.

If some string roots are mushy & appear black, then we snip them off to avoid further spreading to the whole plant.

Cut off lots of string roots to focus more energy on the caudex. If your root ball is infected by fungi, use some water to spray them off.

5. Dry the Plant

After digging the plants up & cut off some damaged roots and big energy consumers, you can take the plants out to dry under the sun for about 2 hours.

We do this to fully exhaust the plants & let the water out in preparation for the resting period.

6. Let the Desert Rose Rest

In a shady, not-too-hot area, hang the desert rose for resting. We've completely cut off water intake as well as the outlets at this point. Just let it rest. Something like "Baby plant, you don't need to do any more work. We know you've had enough & just rest well".

Depending on your plants, this period can be from 7, 10, 15, or 21 days. No water is needed during this time. You can wrap a towel or shirt around the caudex to avoid some remaining leaves becoming wilted.

7. Replant Your Adenium Into Fresh/Cool Medium

After the resting time is over, you can prepare fresh, new medium to put your adenium in. At this time, give your super-thirsty baby a good amount of water. Make sure the potting mix & container drain well and are not too hot.

This is optional & depends on each individual plant, but you may spray some root hormone to promote more root growth. Phosphorous fertilizer can help with root growth as well. Some potassium can also nourish the recovering leaves.

Some folks recommend not to use fertilizer high in nitrogen at this point yet. Especially for grafted desert roses because they might race up to the top to nourish those grafted branches, leaving our caudex soft again. So we want to slowly work the good bits up as the plant fully recovers.

After 3 Remarkable Recovery Months

The recovery process takes time. It can be somewhere from 3 months or more. But be patient with your plants as much as they are trying to heal themselves. When conditions are sufficient & supportive, bounce back will naturally happen.

Don't worry too much my friends. Many growers have had issues with soft caudex. The caudex will get harder & healthy when you give adenium care and love. The soft caudex will harden again with life & strength.

We don't know everything in this world. But we hope this was somewhat helpful. Please share your experience to help other adenium lovers just like you in the community. Thanks for visiting & have a great time!