

Did You Know?



Geranium sanguineum at the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, DC.

Whether you sow just a tomato plant or two in the spring or raise abundant flowers, herbs and produce, ARS can help you be a better gardener. To be a successful gardener, you need to match your growing conditions to plants that will thrive in those conditions. One of the most important conditions is cold hardiness—the average coldest temperature at which a plant will thrive.

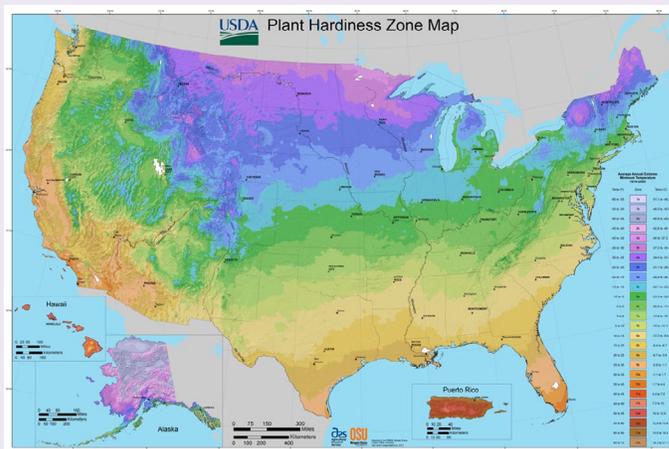
With the new [USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map \(PHZM\)](#), developed by ARS researchers and Oregon State University collaborators, ARS has already helped more than 2.7 million people learn what their zone is. The new map has already had 123.6 million total hits its first year on the Web.

It's not just gardeners who need to know their zone. The hardiness zones provide a common language between those who buy plants and those who develop new ones. Breeders test their new plants so they can correctly label where a new variety will thrive. It's amazing how the zones in which a plant will thrive can differ between varieties of the same species. For example, *Musa basjoo* (Sichuan Hardy Banana) is hardy down to zone 7 (0-10 °F), while *Musa 'Siam Ruby'* (Siam Ruby Banana) is only hardy down to zone 9 (20-30 °F).

Besides the 80 million gardeners in this country, many people need the PHZM. For example, USDA's Risk Management Agency uses the map to set certain standards for crop insurance for nursery crops; Federal, State and local agencies use the map to design lists of recommended trees and shrubs for public land plantings; and many types of researchers integrate the map into their scientific models.

The previous PHZM was done in 1990. But interestingly enough, the [2012](#) map looks more like the map done in [1960](#) than it does the [1990](#) version.

The PHZM also is available with additional features as an iPhone/iPad app called ClimateWise Plant Hardiness. For more information on the app, visit <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/climate-wise-plant-hardiness/id505897090?mt=8> or www.climatesource.com/.



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