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The National Herb Garden at the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, DC.

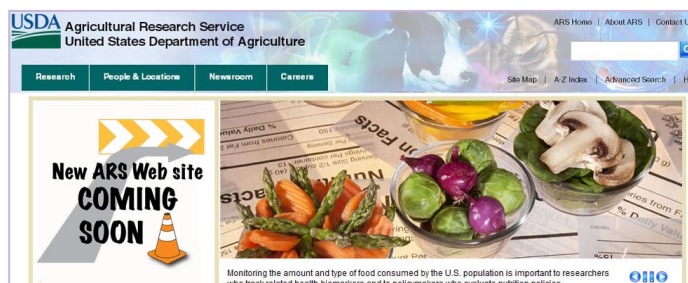
Please submit story ideas and national award items to Mina Chung, [mina.chung@ars.usda.gov](mailto:mina.chung@ars.usda.gov), or call 301-504-1653.

## Keep It Simple!

As part of the Department's and ARS's effort to implement and support the [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)—which requires Federal agencies to use “clear government communication that the public can understand and use”—ARS will be launching a 3-month information campaign on April 1, 2013. The effort focuses on providing online training and resources to employees interested in learning plain writing techniques. All Federal agencies are required to use plain writing in every paper or electronic letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction. The main elements of plain writing include logical organization and use of personal pronouns, active voice, “common”/everyday words, short sentences, and lists and tables. The [“Introduction to Plain Language”](#) course is available on AgLearn. Look for the course in your AgLearn “To Do” list!

For more information, contact ARS's Plain Writing Coordinator, **Tara T. Weaver-Missick**, by email ([tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov](mailto:tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov)) or by phone (301-504-1663). ❖

## New ARS Web Site Coming Soon!



ARS will be launching its new public Web site this spring. Here's a sneak peak at the new design! The site will conform to the new “USDA Web Standards and Style Guide.” Other USDA agencies also are making progress in changing to the new style—including [ERS](#), [GIPSA](#) and [NRCS](#). This project is a huge undertaking. ARS has more than 278,000 Web pages, and approximately 250,000 of those are dynamic—including patents, publications, people, research projects and annual reports—making it one of the most comprehensive USDA Web sites. One new feature on the ARS Web site will be “Popular Topics,” which will be based on trending data from the most frequently visited publicly accessed ARS Web pages. ❖

## Your Two Cents (Y2C)



[www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents](http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents)

The ARS [Cultural Transformation](#) (CT) Team continues to re-invent ARS's cultural transformation efforts. Watch for new CT site components added to the new ARS Intranet site coming soon! [Your Two Cents](#) site improvements are continuing to be made, based on suggestions received at the Y2C Summit. Most notable of these changes is the addition of an "Action Items" management console, which will allow employees to track the progress of action items and related accomplishments. We plan to unveil the improved site just in time for Y2C's third birthday this May, so stay tuned! ❀

## Around ARS

On February 11, 2013, the [Landsat Data Continuity Mission](#) (Landsat 8) was successfully launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, CA. This satellite continues the 40-year Landsat program legacy of global Earth observation of human activity—recording changes in land cover, and agricultural and urban land and water use in response to increasing population and changing climate conditions. Research Physical Scientists **Martha Anderson** and **Feng Gao**, ARS Hydrology and Remote Sensing Laboratory, Beltsville, MD, attended the launch. They served on the Landsat Science Team developing applications for monitoring crop life cycles, water use and drought impact. Other USDA Team members include representatives from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Risk Management Agency and Forest Service. ❀



Landsat 8 being lifted into orbit by an Atlas V rocket. Photo by NASA.



ARS exhibit at the New York State Farm Show.

On February 13, 2013, employees from the **ARS Robert W. Holley Center for Agriculture and Health** in Ithaca, NY, participated in a Science and Math Expo at the Freeville Elementary School in Freeville, NY. They provided hands-on activities such as insect displays for students to look at under the microscope. One of the most popular displays was that of the emerald ash borer that included all of its life stages. Living insects also were available for children to touch.

On February 21-23, 2013, **ARS Robert W. Holley Center for Agriculture and Health** employees and those from the **ARS Plant Genetic Resources Unit** in Geneva, NY, participated in the New York State Farm Show in Syracuse, NY. This annual farm show is one of the largest agriculture shows in the Northeast, attracting over 25,000 visitors and 400 vendors. ARS scientists were on hand to explain their research projects. ❀

Approximately 1,400 visitors at USDA's 2013 Agricultural Outlook Forum in Arlington, VA, February 21-22, 2013, were treated to many different USDA exhibits, including an exhibit by the **ARS Information Staff** highlighting ARS research and an exhibit by the **National Agricultural Library** (NAL) showcasing resources from NAL's **Food and Nutrition Information Center** and **Alternative Farming Systems Information Center**. The theme of this year's Forum was "Managing Risk in the 21st Century." This annual conference is an opportunity for producers, policymakers, and government and industry analysts from around the world to come together and discuss agricultural issues. ❀

## Notable Awards



Kevin Hackett.

**Kevin Hackett**, ARS National Program Leader for Biological Control, Beltsville, MD, received the Rutgers University Graduate School's Lifetime Achievement Award at the Annual Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony on March 1. Hackett was honored for his leadership in pest management and insect genomics and for his research accomplishments in insect pathology. ❀

Two ARS scientists were honored at the 37th biennial meeting of the [American Society for Sugar Beet Technology](#) in Anaheim, CA, February 27-March 3. Research Plant Pathologist **Linda Hanson**, ARS Sugarbeet and Bean Research Unit, East Lansing, MI, received the Meritorious Service award for her research on sugar beet plant pathogens, especially soilborne diseases caused by *Fusarium* and *Rhizoctonia*. Research Plant Geneticist **Robert Lewellen**, ARS U.S. Agricultural Research Station, Salinas, CA, received the Honorary Member award for his work with Rhizomania disease resistance crucial in maintaining the profitability of the sugar beet industry in the United States and worldwide. ❀

Biological Science Technician **Chris Werle**, ARS Thad Cochran Southern Horticultural Research Laboratory, Poplarville, MS, placed second in the Ph.D. student poster competition for his poster, "Optimizing Ambrosia Beetle Monitoring Using Colored Traps," at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Branch of the [Entomological Society of America](#) in Baton Rouge, LA, March 3-5. Werle is a Ph.D. student at Louisiana State University's School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences. ❀



Chris Werle.

Research Agricultural Engineer **Mark E. Casada**, ARS Center for Grain and Animal Health Research, Manhattan, KS, received the Andersons Cereals and Oilseeds Award of Excellence from [Multistate Project NC-213-The U.S. Quality Grains Research Consortium](#) for his superior contributions to science and education related to cereals and oilseeds at the organization's annual meeting on February 13, 2013, in Kansas City, MO. ❀



Mark Casada.



## 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.

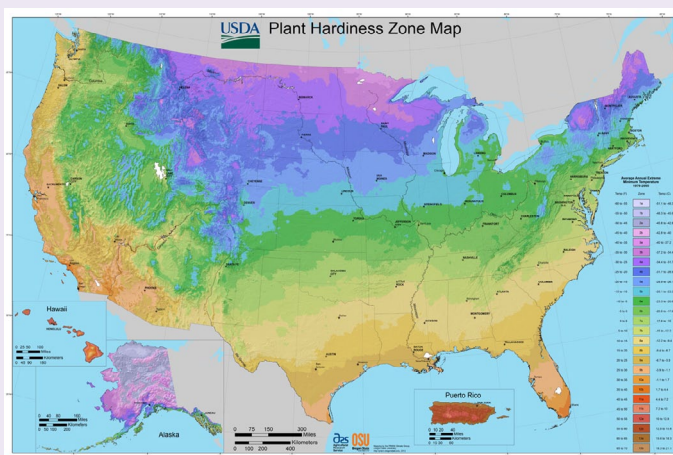
With the new [USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#) (PHZM), developed by ARS researchers and Oregon State University collaborators, ARS has already helped more than 2.7 million people learn what their zone is. The new map has already had 123.6 million total hits its first year on the Web.

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/](http://www.climatesource.com/).



Written by **Kim Kaplan**, ARS Information Staff.

### Executive Editor

Sandy Miller Hays

### Managing Editor

Tara T. Weaver-Missick

### Writer-Editor

Mina Chung

### Designer-Editor

Carol Nathan

### Contributors

Sean Adams  
Carol Durflinger  
Melanie J. Filiatrault  
Jennifer Gilbert  
Tracy Havermann

Kim Kaplan  
Linda Neuenhahn  
Joseph Spence  
Tara T. Weaver-Missick  
Monica Williams