

Catalogs

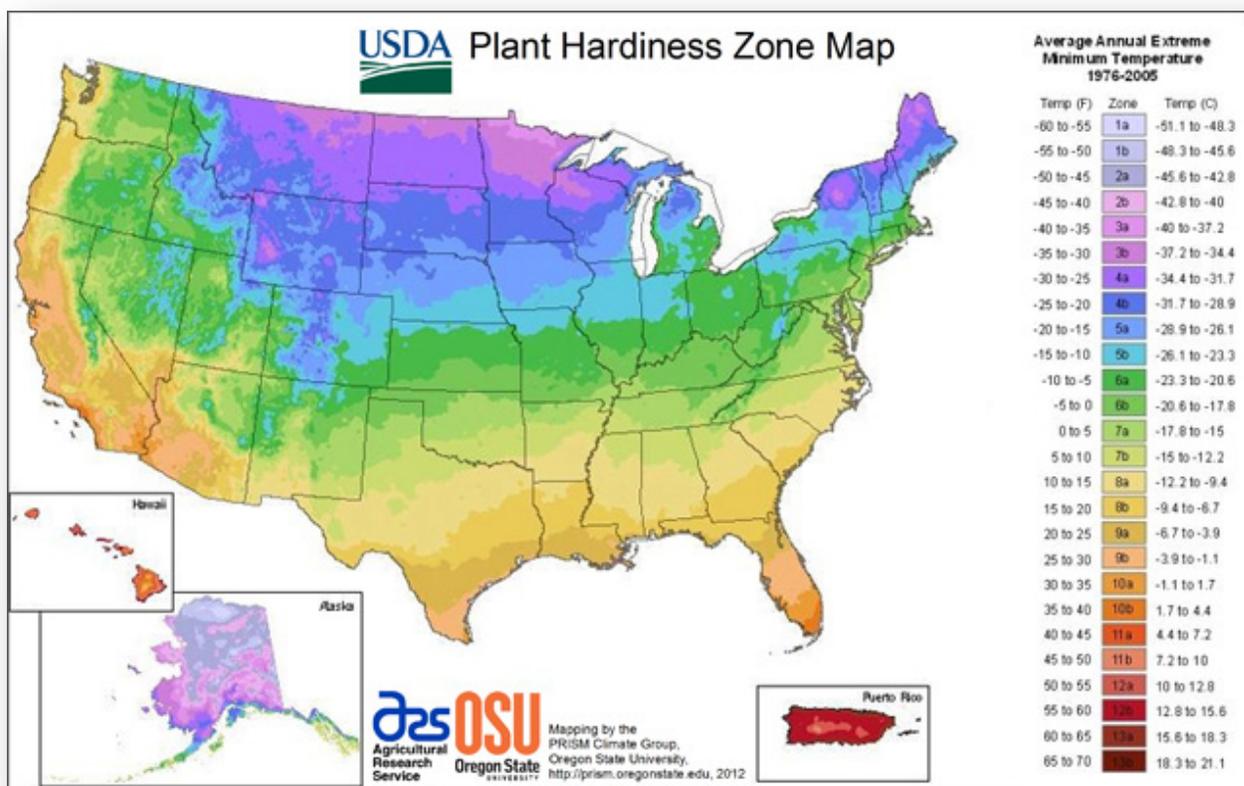
This is the wonderful time of the year when the seed catalogs arrive, bringing pages and pages of fabulous photographs - perfect flowers and vegetables to make your mouth water.

They all look so good, and once you receive one catalog, you should be prepared for a whole onslaught from so many parts of the country.

Many arrive from places that rarely see anything close to our high temperatures but do get water, reliably, from the sky! These places frequently have soil that you can dig with a shovel; no blasting caps necessary.

Obviously, a plant variety that thrives under those conditions will not necessarily even survive here.

Many catalogs will say that this plant or that needs full sun and will do well in USDA zone 8. Does that mean it will definitely do well here?



We are not exactly in zone 8. The most recent USDA zone map puts us in 8b or 9a. That designation means temperatures almost never drop below 20° in the winter, but says nothing about summer high temperatures, nor our bright light. Full sunlight in Southern Nevada is

considerably more intense than other regions, and can cause scorched leaves, flowers, fruit, even tree bark.

If a plant is accustomed to 40 or 50% humidity, it will not thrive where relative humidity rarely exceeds 20%. We can go for months without seeing water. A drought tolerant plant might grow perfectly well here, but might not survive our winters!

Newer gardeners must remember - planting seeds in this region cannot follow the same schedule as planting in other places. Leafy greens go in the ground until the end of February; later than mid-March can be a recipe for disaster. A lot of catalogs do not make those kinds of distinctions.

In the tomato section of many catalogs, there are **pages** of varieties. Some are ready to pick after 65 days, others after 90 days. Those shorter growing periods generally give better results. The fruits may be smaller, but they mature and turn into those luscious things before the heat of summer literally cooks them on the vine.

When looking at the glorious photos, think about what your plants will experience.

The best desert survivors tend to have smaller, thicker leaves. Are you thinking about putting in a large leafed perennial? Do not expose it to western, afternoon light – that tends to scorch. Are you looking at planting something with a high fertilizer requirement? You probably need to amend your soil or build a raised bed filled with rich mix.

For more information on growing vegetables in Southern Nevada, you might be interested in attending my “Growing in Small Places” series. Once a month I will be presenting a different topic in gardening under our challenging conditions. We enjoy meeting new, intrepid gardeners. Register in advance by calling Elaine Fagin (257-5573) at the Extension office.

Speaking of intrepid, do not let these cautions about seed catalogs stop you from experimenting. Your garden could have a microclimate where everything performs just splendidly.