

GREEN HARVEST

Useful hints & tips for the garden

Climate Zones © Frances Michaels

This information should help you decide which climate zone you live in: you need to know this to choose the best plants for your area and also the correct sowing time. People don't always realise that living in a certain place actually determines the type of garden you will have and the plants that you will grow. If you grow your own vegetables and fruit then where you live determines how you eat or should.

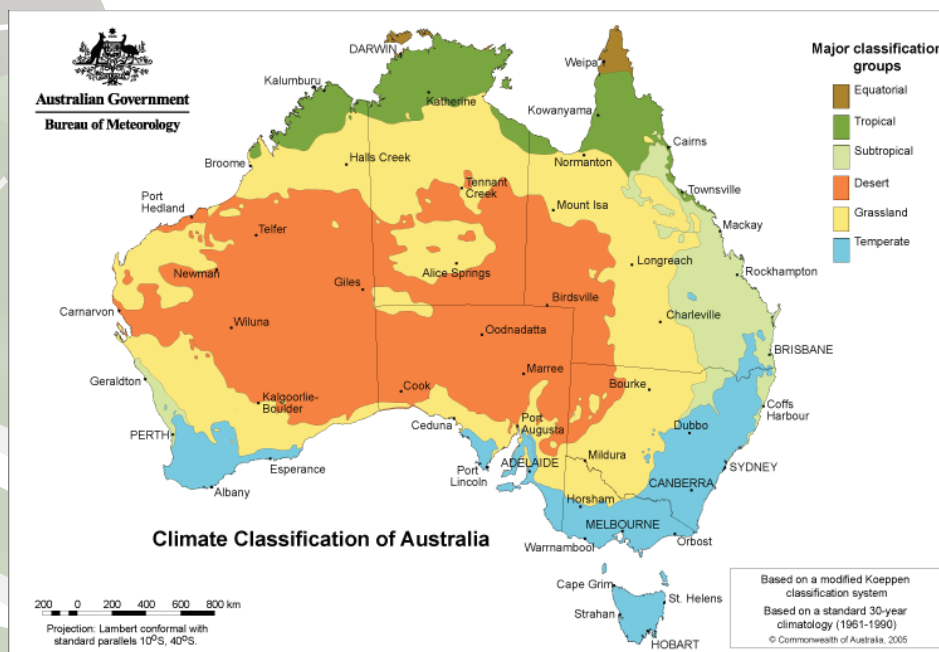
Gardening can be hard work but adding a fight with nature turns it into a constant uphill battle that is going to be lost. Always growing what does best in your area at the right time of year is one of the cornerstones of organic gardening. Many pesticides and fungicides exist because of this simple fact, that gardeners persist in trying to grow plants that are unsuitable to the climate zone. These plants are unhealthy, they suffer stress from trying to grow in the wrong place, and there is a constant pest and disease pressure on them.

If you are new to gardening then concentrate on what does well in your area. To find this out you need to do extra homework; the time you put into understanding your local climate and its variations in detail will stand you in good stead. Check the Bureau of Meteorology, local gardening groups and local newspapers to build a better picture of your local area.

Keeping a gardening diary of when you sow what, the date the first and last frost occurred, particular pest outbreaks, will help a newcomer to gardening to get a handle on this. It will get simpler over time, terms gardeners throw around will become clear and the joy of gardening, the dance with the seasons, the pride and pleasure of growing food and the sheer beauty of gardening will take over.

Microclimate

Understanding your climate zone is just the beginning, every garden has local 'microclimate' variations. If you live on a hill, each aspect - north, south, east and west - will have slightly different climatic variations. The eastern side will get morning sun, which is not as hot as afternoon sun but more likely to cause frost damage. The southern side will be much cooler than the northern. The western side will be hotter and drier. The wind exposure will also be different: the eastern side may receive cooling breezes; the southern, destructive strong winds. Lower areas will receive more frost usually than higher areas, as the cold air drains downhill at night and settles in the low-lying areas.



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