



## Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article February 04, 2019

### Magical Microclimates

By Lydia Holley

Does your garden have microclimates? Microclimates are small pockets of areas which have different weather conditions than the general area. For example, if you have an area in your garden which is surrounded by concrete, this area may be warmer than the rest of your garden - a microclimate. Or you may have a colder microclimate simply due to an abundance of trees.



Pictured: Brugmansia grows in a warm microclimate

If you have microclimates in your landscape, you may be able to grow plants there that would not survive elsewhere in your garden. For instance, an area protected from the north wind and surrounded by brick walls and concrete curbing may allow you to grow plants that would normally freeze elsewhere. Notice which areas tend to freeze early, and which areas seem to almost never freeze.

The shape of the land may also give you some type of microclimate, whether it is a dry, windy hillside or a damp, cold, depressed area in your garden. In these places, you may be able to enjoy plants that might not grow well in other areas of your garden, or you may need to determine plants that can take the harsh conditions of your particular microclimate.

Microclimates can be miniature spaces, or, if conditions are right, the microclimate may be felt along several acres. If you have an area next to a pond or other water feature, you may enjoy a small microclimate next to it. If you live along a lake, you may experience a rather large area of microclimate.

A microclimate in Michigan and other areas along the Great Lakes, allows the production of fruit to be grown there, which is known as the fruit belt. The lakes keep certain areas cool in spring, delaying the onset of blooms in the spring, protecting the trees from late frosts. In the fall, the reverse is true - the lakes keep the surrounding areas warmer. Summer temperatures are cooler, while winter temperatures are warmer. Some microclimates may be over 10 degrees warmer or colder than the surrounding area, which essentially means you may be gardening in a different planting zone than the one listed on the USDA map. That can be very exciting to a gardener.

Although most gardeners know to look for plants that grow in their planting zone, you just might be able to find a microclimate in your garden that you can use to fool Mother Nature.

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