level a little higher than normal.

In the Garden By Kylee Baumle I recently spent a week in San Francisco, touring amazing public and private gardens, as well as seeing the usual tourist hot spots. With Ohio temperatures hovering around the 95-degree mark when I left, the Mediterranean climate of San Francisco was looking mighty fine to me. As luck would have it, the bay area was experiencing an unusual heat wave and as we roamed around this garden and that one, I felt like I'd jumped from the frying pan into the fire. But unbelievable beauty was all around me, with an abundance of plants that I was unfamiliar with, due in part to San Francisco being blessed with so many microclimates. Our little pocket of Ohio is in USDA Zone 5b, meaning that we can grow perennials that have been listed as hardy to temperatures of -15°F. Most of the state is listed as Zone 6 under the new maps, but if you are in Paulding or any of the surrounding counties, don't count on that. Of course, temperature is only one part of the plant success equation, but it's a good starting point. We all have those areas in our gardens where a few plants grow, defying logic according to the rules of horticulture. There are reasons we have this, and it has little to do with the plant or luck. Because of specific location, such as being on the south or east side of the house, in a corner, on the east side of a hedge, in a depression or valley, or near a stone or brick wall, we many

Nearly every garden has one or more of these microclimates and once you find yours, you can take advantage of it and grow plants listed as being hardy to Zone 6, possibly even Zone 7, if you're lucky.

times can get away with growing plants that are typically too tender for our winters. These factors may offer some protection from the wind and some raise the overall temperature to a

Because of its location next to the Pacific Ocean and the bay, as well as the hills and mountains, and the varying winds, San Francisco has an abundance of microclimates. Seventeen of them have been identified there, so depending on where you live in the bay area, your garden could be vastly different from friends who live as close as 10 miles away.

Half Moon Bay, on the coast, has an average July temperature of 64°, yet Walnut Creek, just 25 miles inland has an average of 87°. We don't have that wide of a variation here, but minor ones exist and can be created using other plantings or structures in a protective manner.

In my own garden, I have found that I can grow a few Zone 6 plants in an area on the south side of our house. It has several factors that work in the plants' favor. Besides facing south, there is a row of yews that protect it from westerly winds and because those yews run fairly parallel to the side of the house, it traps the warm air there.

Gardeners like to push the zone envelope, because we're like everyone else – we want that which we cannot have. With the wonder of microclimates, perhaps you can have what you didn't think you could. Look around your gardens and your yard to see if you might have one of these areas, or can create one, and plant something "iffy" to see how it does. You may be pleasantly surprised!

Read Kylee Baumle's blog, Our Little Acre at www.ourlittleacre.com and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre. Contact her at PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com.