



WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

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Programs, information and registration is now posted on the [Pennsylvania Wine Grape Network](#) website for these three upcoming meeting:

February 8: Viticulture workshop with Xavier Chone and Jim Law at Blair Vineyards

March 8: New grape grower workshop at the Eastern Winery Exposition in Lancaster

March 19: Wine grape integrated pest management workshop at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center (and Washington, Erie and Susquehanna)

Please check the [regional events calendar](#) for other meetings in your area, including pruning workshops, state association conferences, large conferences with trade shows, webinars, etc.

For PA and Eastern wine growers I would like to call your attention to the Thursday, March 7th viticulture sessions at the Eastern Winery Exposition in Lancaster that will cover these important topics: new pomace fly pests in Eastern vineyards (Dr. Doug Pfeiffer, VA Tech), grape fungal diseases (Dr. Mike Ellis, Ohio State Univ), strategies for sour rot reduction and avoidance (Cristina Huber, Guelph Univ), and Lucie Morton will explain how to source healthy and true-to-type grapevines. On Wednesday Dr. Alan Lakso (Cornell Univ) will talk about vine size, vine capacity, crop load and vine balance. I heard this talk in Virginia last year and it's an outstanding overview of these key viticultural guiding principles that impact wine quality. Click [HERE](#) for the EWE schedule.

Cold Injury to Vines: This morning the temperature around much of the upper half of the state was in the single digits. In Chester and Lancaster counties the low was 11F and the forecast call for continued frigid temperatures around the region. *Vinifera* vines in particular can be at risk when temperatures dip this low but there is often no one variable, even low temperature, that causes winter injury, which can be an extremely random event in any vineyard. Despite a warmer than normal December, the [bud hardiness data from Cornell](#) is quite normal, with Riesling LT50 at about -10F in different locations in the Finger Lakes area. The LT figures apply to specific locations and need to be adjusted upwards for

southern locations with a rough 2-3F difference between the Finger Lakes and the Mid-Atlantic regions. I spoke with a grower and extension colleague today in the Finger Lakes and both said their pucker point for *vinifera* is 0F. A cause for concern is when temperatures fluctuate between warm and very cold, but that hasn't happened this month. With our roller coaster climate it's hard for growers to know what to do – record heat in the summer and all the discussion of climate change, but cold temperatures can still prevail in winter. Wine growing is all about risk management and each grower decides how much exposure he or she can tolerate. It is my opinion that *vinifera* vineyards north of the Mason-Dixon line should be hilled-up annually and especially young vines. Nevertheless, if your vineyard is in a frost or winter injury prone site, it would be prudent to adjust pruning practices and do a survey of both bud and trunk injury to susceptible varieties. It's conditions like these that help us to understand the wisdom of cold hardy varieties, such as the new Minnesota hybrids. The options now are few for growers with tender varieties, the work done in Ontario to protect vineyards with wind machines is probably the most practical strategy. But knowing if there is damage and if there is, how much and adjusting bud numbers accordingly would be a very wise approach to vineyard management. There are plenty of excellent resources for growers to use including [Winter Injury to Grapevines and Methods of Protection](#) from Michigan State Univ. and from Cornell University [How Grapevine Buds Gain and Lose Cold Hardiness](#) and 2 YouTube videos about [bud injury testing](#) from the Finger Lakes Grape Program, USDA-NIFA [e-Extension Cold Injury to Grapes, cold hardiness information](#) from Washington State University, and outstanding [grape cold hardiness research](#) done by Dr. Kevin Ker and Brock University in Ontario.

The Finger Lakes and Wine Spectator: I would guess that most people in the Eastern wine industry do not read the Wine Spectator (WS), which is a monthly wine consumer magazine. In their February issue an article by beat writer [James Molesworth](#) titled “Finger Lakes Forges Ahead” in my opinion represents a milestone in the evolution and maturation of the Eastern wine industry. While WS has covered the Finger Lakes (FL) and other eastern wine areas (erratically and infrequently) in the past, this is the first time that an Eastern wine region has been added to the regular rotation of wine regions covered by WS. Mr. Molesworth has written some lukewarm reviews of the Finger Lakes in the past, but this is the first time he appears to wholeheartedly endorse it as an area capable of producing outstanding Germanic white wine varieties. Why is WS important? Because the people who we want to drink our wines read it, and whether or not the production side of wine acknowledges its methodology or influence, it is a third party arbiter of the quality of wines we are making, and its readers trust their judgment. I would encourage growers, wine makers, winery and vineyard owners and wine industry leaders to read the article (not available on-line) and the complete list of [wines evaluated](#) and their scores, if for no other reason than they represent the opinion of an accepted authority about how a wine industry is performing. For me it isn't about how Winery A or Winery X fared in the scoring, but how the scores reflect the overall quality of the wines being made. It is not scientific, it may or may not be biased, but it matters to the consumer so therefore it should probably matter to us. Why the Finger Lakes? It is hardly by accident. At the Atlantic Canada Wine Symposium in Halifax, I heard Ms. Morgen McLaughlin explain how the Finger Lakes wineries and her organization, [Finger Lakes Wine Country](#), mapped out a strategy to get WS to taste, score and write about their wines. It was an amazing tale and, it would seem, is now paying big dividends. Also involved were very activist winery owners like Bob Madill at Sheldrake Point Winery and Jim Trezise, the director the NY Wine and Grape Foundation. Great wines are being made in many other wine areas of the East, but it is the Finger Lakes that the Wine Spectator has decided to feature, and they will reap the rewards for their efforts. I hope that others will soon regularly appear in the pages of WS and other important wine consumer publications.

Yields: Talking with grape growers after the harvest dust has settled has led me to observe that yields were low across the state due to a variety of factors including spring frost, a variety of berry/cluster diseases and maladies such as coulure, millerandage, bunch stem necrosis and possibly berry shrivel, birds, wasps, deer, and the usual vast array of post-veraison and harvest threats. I wish I had hard data to back up this claim, but we don't collect yield data across the state nor do most growers accurately assess their vineyard yields either before or during harvest, or spend much time wondering why their yields are less than optimal. Low yield is a complicated viticultural problem because it is often the result of a myriad of problems and to determine the incidence and severity of any one of them, much less the entire spectrum, is the kind of information that only a diligent researcher with a lot of grad students can do. According to my observations, there are some areas we can focus on to improve vineyard yields and some of these will be discussed at the March IPM meeting in Lancaster, including:

- Better early season inflorescence and cluster disease control, especially downy mildew, botrytis and phomopsis.
- I have heard from enough growers to be fairly convinced that resistance of downy mildew to Pristine can be a problem in vineyard. Pristine has been one of the main fungicides used during the critical bloom sprays but downy outbreaks indicate the strobilurin component has failed and other methods of protection are necessary.
- Spring frost, and especially the May 28 event was probably the major cause of reduced yields in southeast Pennsylvania vineyards. Site quality was paramount and I saw any number of examples of vineyards on slopes or the top of hills that were less affected by frost. If your vineyard is in a frost-prone location, then it would be prudent to examine all active and passive methods of protection before frost season arrives.
- Berry disorders such as bunch stem necrosis and berry shrivel have affected vineyards across the region but I do not have the ability positively identify the problem. I have seen many clusters, particularly on red vinifera grapes, with shriveled or completely necrotic parts of the cluster, usually the lower portion. Coincidentally, a very good [review of ripening disorders](#) appeared in January *Wines and Vines* by Washington State University vine physiologist Dr. Bhaskar Bondada.
- The stretch run from veraison to harvest has become a minefield for grape growers and we hope to attack the problems at the IPM workshop. Birds, grape berry moth, spotted wing drosophila (?), bees and deer that not only remove fruit but cause the injury that exacerbates fruit rots including botrytis, sour, bitter and ripe rots, these last minute threats probably do more to compromise fruit and wine quality than anything that occurs earlier in the season. There aren't always good solutions to every problem but each one should be examined and managed in the most effective way possible.
- We should not only blame environmental factors, disease, insects etc. for our yield woes. We need to ask what we are contributing to the problem. Are we calibrating sprayers properly and using the best products at the right time? Is canopy management up to the level to combat these threats? Is the labor necessary to available at critical times in the vineyard? Every aspect of vineyard management must be considered in the minute detail.

Low yields can be a quiet killer of vineyard sustainability, and obviously profitability. Yet, it is something that growers often take for granted and just say they will hope for better yields next year. This is not a sound management strategy. Growers should strive for the maximum yield that will meet the quality parameters set by the winery, not a single berry less. It takes a lot of planning and effort to get a vineyard to produce optimal yields. It begins with the site and soils, vineyard design and development and then the management of the vineyard every year. It is quiet and cold in the vineyard now, yet yields

are being dramatically affected by pruning decisions and quite possibly the weather. Can you see far enough ahead to harvest to know how conditions and practices now will affect its outcome?

Winery assistant wanted: Small, growing winery in Southern York County, Pennsylvania is looking for an energetic individual to learn from the ground up the entire operation of the winery. Some experience in wine making and wine cellar operations is preferred. Job will include learning all aspects of the operation with goal of taking over as lead wine maker and winery manager. Contact Steve at steverwood@comcast.net.

Tour the Loire Valley: Join Professor Pascal Durand and Winegrower Bob Madill on another special Winemaker's Exploration of vineyards, wines, producers and cuisine of the Loire Valley in April 2013. Our one week (7 nights) on Sunday April 7 and return to the airport on Saturday April 13 for the return to the US on Sunday April 14. We will visit vineyards and cellars to experience and understand the Loire expression of varieties such as reds - Cabernet Franc & Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Cot, Gamay, Pineau d'Aunis (Chenin Noir); and whites - Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc. These tours with Pascal have become legendary and are a good educational and social experience. Contact Bob Madill at RJMadill@gmail.com or (607) 351-0833

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