

## WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

<http://pawinegrape.com>

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*March is packed with goodies for the inquisitive wine grower in the Eastern U.S. including the new Eastern Winery Exposition which starts tomorrow in Lancaster and the granddaddy of winery tradeshow, Wineries Unlimited in Richmond at the end of the month. The New Grape Grower workshop in on Friday in Lancaster and there is still space if you want to attend (send me an [e-mail](#)). Check the regional viticulture and enology events calendar for updated listings.*

**Ontario:** I think there are wine industries and then there are “serious” wine industries. Ontario is serious. I was there to speak at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention (a serious meeting) and got to tour some vineyards and wineries between sessions. It is all very impressive. It got me to wonder why they can do it there and we have struggled down here. For example, the Grape Growers of Ontario are a \$3.8M organization representing the needs of Ontario’s grape growers, who tend 14,000 acres of grapes, and still growing. It’s not ideal viticultural conditions there - so far north and predominantly clay soils, but they have learned to manage their challenges, with the help of significant research and education programs at Brock University and Niagara College, and a faithful partner in the provincial government. The VQA program is the standard for the world (in my humble estimation). I say again: it is all very impressive. You can read my [impressions of Ontario and notes from the grape sessions of OFVC](#), including talks by Andrew Landers on spray deposition, Stefano Poni on leaf removal for crop and fruit rot reduction and Rufus Isaacs on grape berry moth management.

**Grape IPM Workshop:** So far about a dozen people have signed up for the Grape IPM Workshop on 3/21. Folks, I was out there last fall and saw and smelled the sour rot and botrytis in the vineyards. I cannot believe that every commercial winegrower from Maryland in the south, New Jersey to the east, north to Hudson River Valley and the Finger Lakes, does not need to learn more about fruit rot management after last year’s debacle. Dr. Wendy McFadden-Smith is talking about her work with sour rot control and I am certain that every grower that had a rotten berry needs to hear what she has to say. If I sound a bit piqued it’s because I disdain the odor of volatile acidity in vineyards in the fall. It portends of crummy wine and it works against everything we are trying to do to establish a fine wine region. You need to help yourself to help us to get this done. If nothing else, sit down for five minutes and figure out how much in wine value your loses to fruit rots cost your business, then decide if it’s worth your time to learn more about how to control diseases in your vineyard. There will also be Tim Weigle talking about organic grape growing and the NEWA grape disease forecasting system, Tremain Hatch will bring us up to date on grapevine yellows in Virginia (it’s in Pennsylvania, too), and our grape pathology team, Bryan Hed, Noemi Halbrendt and John Halbrendt will cover grape diseases. Six category pesticide credits are available. Click [HERE](#) for registration and workshop information.

Note: **Virginia Tech** is hosting a [grape IPM workshop](#) at the Loudon County Fairgrounds on March 19th.

**Meeting Materials:** There is a lot going on these days. I have given presentations in Ontario and Maryland, as well as the pruning workshops and a session with Adam McTaggart from Boxwood Vineyards about Cabernet Franc production at the Eastern Winery Exposition, the new grape grower workshop on 3/9, and a recent visit to the Return to Terroir biodynamic wine tasting event in New York City. I will post almost all of the notes and materials on the Pennsylvania Wine Grape Network website's [Meeting Summaries](#) section, including a paper by Dr. Stefano Poni on leaf removal and a collection of articles about Cabernet Franc.

**Biodynamic Wines:** It is hard to dismiss a production system, no matter how unusual, that is used in earnest by some of the commonly acknowledged greatest wine estates in the world. The folks who sell wine, including the popular wine media, as well as sommeliers, retailers and consumers appear to be transfixed by organic and biodynamic wines. Personally, I do not have a problem with biodynamics. It's out there and people respond to it, so I think we (production, research and extension) have to pay attention. I attended the 7<sup>th</sup> Return to Terroir tasting in New York, where 77 BD wines were poured and recorded some [comments and thoughts about biodynamic wine growing](#). Is biodynamic wine production practical for Eastern US vineyards? Other than on a very small scale, I do not believe it is. But even if it doesn't fit our conditions, we should learn from it.

**Winery Sanitation Workshop:** I'm not a wine maker but I know enough to know that there is hardly anything more fundamental to fine wine production than a sanitary cellar and wine making practices. Penn State extension enologist Denise Gardner and colleagues at Cornell extension are offering an all-day winery sanitation workshop at the CLEREL research lab in Portland, (western) NY on April 11<sup>th</sup>. It will cover the basics and terminology of sanitation, microbiology of spoilage, protocols and evaluating effectiveness, and a tasting of wine flaws. Cost is \$50 and pre-registration is required by April 6. Click [HERE](#) for information and registration. Denise has other wine making events coming up including [Level 2 PWQI](#) in four locations around the state in April/May. Call her for more details.

**Here We Go Again:** It has been unseasonably warm this winter which portends an early budbreak, which means an extended frost season. While an early start on the front end of the season bodes well for an early harvest, frost has been a significant problem in recent years. There are many passive and active measures to deal with frost, the expensive ones tend to work pretty well and the inexpensive ones are, well, you get what you pay for. The best deterrent is proper site selection, which you have probably discovered on your own by now. Some of the more readily available methods include using soy bean oil sprays, keeping the cover crop mowed very low, and double pruning cane and-or spur pruned vines to take advantage of apical dominance. We have 4-6 weeks before bud break so there is plenty of time to finish pruning and tying and to get ready for the new vintage. [Here We Go Again 2012](#) is my annual kick-off instructions for the upcoming vintage and I hope it will be helpful and optimistic as we head into a new year.

**Vineyard for Sale:** If someone is looking to buy a small turnkey vineyard to get into the wine industry, you may want to consider [Bluebird Vineyard](#) in the Lehigh Valley.

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