



WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

<http://pawinegrape.com/>

Holiday Issue: sit by the fireplace with a glass of your favorite wine (preferably Pinot Noir) and enjoy!

Note: you can read all of the articles listed below on the [Pennsylvania Wine Grape Network](http://pawinegrape.com/) website.

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Pruning: It may be the single most important thing you do in your vineyard each year. With the mild weather recently, many growers have started pruning. I suggested waiting until the tips of canes are fully woody, and then prune according to variety/species (native>hybrid>*vinifera*) and according to value of the wine (lesser to greater) and age of vines (older to younger). There is still plenty of winter ahead and opportunity for winter injury. The acclimation figures from the Finger Lakes look promising: on December 19th the LT50 for Cabernet Franc was -9.7F and Riesling was -11.5F (*Finger Lakes Vineyard Update* 12/20/11). Dr. Tony Wolf talks about dormant pruning in his December *Viticulture Notes* (see below) and particularly hazards of woody trunk diseases such as Eutypa and Botryosphaeria, along with management recommendations. Tony said that learning to prune is like learning to swim, no matter how much you read and study it, you just have to jump in and do it. I would go one step further and say that at a commercial level of wine quality the doggie-paddle is good not enough and you have to master the fine technique of stroke. There is a right and wrong way to prune a vine and the wrong way leads to all kinds of trouble for the vines. It's extremely complicated, but over time becomes second nature. Yet it must be learned correctly. Study the books and watch pruning videos first, but then prune with someone who is very experienced and be very careful not to pick up bad habits. Look at a photo of a 20-year old Cabernet Sauvignon vine in the great To-Kalon vineyard in Oakville, managed by Andy

Beckstoffer and Dave Michul. After so many years, the spur positions (slide #22 in Pruning) are still perfect. This isn't by accident, it is completely intentional because their skilled pruning crew knows how to shape a vine. Pruning is the first attempt of the new season to achieve a balanced vine. Ideally, the pruning alone will balance the vine. But often follow up steps will be necessary later in the year. You should know what your balance vine goals are and have a clear strategy to achieve them. If you don't, talk to a viticulturist who can help you to determine the proper size, shape and balance of your vines. I will be hosting two commercial wine vineyard pruning workshops this winter (dates and places will be announced soon), there are already pruning workshops scheduled in Maryland and Virginia (see events calendar). For more information about pruning, go to the Pennsylvania Wine Grape Network > Resources > Viticulture and view the **Pruning** presentation and look for pruning, and vine size and balance articles under "**Other Topics.**"

Pinot Noir: It's been called the Heartbreak Grape and having worked with it for 16 years in Oregon I can say the name is justified. Vineyards that were in the storm track in 2011 experienced difficulties with disease and ripening but perhaps none more than Pinot Noir. It is particularly frustrating because we went from a sublime vintage in 2010 to a forgettable one this year. We know we can make wonderful Pinots in areas as diverse as the Lehigh Valley, Finger Lakes and Niagara Peninsula, the trick is to figure out how to make solid wines in off vintages. In [The Problem with Pinot](#), I try to sort out the issues with this delicate and frustrating grape.

More about Pinot Noir: The great English wine writers, Hugh Johnson, Michael Broadbent, Clive Coates, Gerald Asher, Jancis Robinson, Stephen Brook, Remington Norman and others are not necessarily trained viticulturists but they have the rare advantage of being allowed entry to many of the greatest vineyards in the world and tasting their wines. These are clever people who are able to connect the dots between vineyards and glass, and so their observations, while perhaps not based in formal training, are well worth considering. Remington Norman, the Burgundy specialist, has a new book out called [Grand Cru: The Great Wines of Burgundy through the Perspective of Its Finest Vineyards](#). I can usually tell how much interesting information I am able to glean from a text like this by the number of page markers, and the extent to which each page is highlighted in the book. There is a lot of practical value in this text, and though I do not agree with everything that Mr. Norman has to say, he is reporting directly from the producers so I assume that what he presents is a valid representation of current practices in Burgundy. In [Notes from Remington Norman](#) I try to highlight the most interesting viticultural factoids from his new book, which, if you are a Pinot or Chardonnay producer, you would enjoy reading.

Even more about Pinot - Blair Vineyards: The first time I drove down the hill and around the corner and saw Rich Blair's new vineyard site in northern Berks county I felt certain that he would achieve his dream of making a Burgundy-style and quality wine in the hills of the Lehigh Valley. A recent visit to his cellar appears to affirm that observation, which you can read about in [The Long Road to an Identity](#). I have been in a Pinot noir and Chardonnay frame of mind, having read *Grand Cru* and mused over the problems of Pinot Noir production this vintage. Tasting Rich's 2010 wines was one of those "ah-ha" moments when I realize that we can do quite magical things to a grape in Pennsylvania if you take the time to find the right place, and the care to design, develop, farm and then make the wine. Rich has done all of this with great investment, patience, perseverance, passion, generosity and creativity. I know that I will be queuing up for these wines for my cellar. These are benchmark wines that everyone

in our industry should taste. My hat is off to Rich, Cathy, Leon and their team for making such delicious wines.

Organic Winegrowing: Those of you who know my approach to wine growing in the East realize that I approach organic and biodynamic methods with great care and caution. My basic philosophy is this: our obligation is to make the best wine possible, not necessarily to serve a particular philosophy or methodology. In vintages like 2010, our best wine growers may be successful with organic practices, but in 2011 it was duck and cover and hope for the best. Yet, in many ways the organic approach is the most desirable because it nurtures our desire to protect the environment and grow the healthiest grapes possible. While it may not be something we can achieve on a regular basis, it is a method of wine growing we should acknowledge, understand, and even aspire to. And with climate change and a constant stream of new products coming on line, perhaps someday organic viticulture will be the standard form in the East. Over the years I have noted that it is usually the most experienced and best winegrowers who are able to adopt these practices successfully. In 2010 I hosted a sustainable winegrowing workshop and [Glenn McGourty](#), University of California extension viticulture/farm advisor from Mendocino County was the keynote speaker. Glenn probably has more contact with organic wine production systems than anyone in the world. It is our good fortune that he has decided to put his knowledge into words as the technical editor of a new book called [Organic Winegrowing Manual](#). As far as I can tell, it is the most up to date guide to organic wine growing practices and, yes, it's from dry and sunny California but it has plenty of information in it that could be useful even in our soggy climate. Reminder: there are two other new books out that sustainable wine growers will enjoy – [A View from the Vineyard: A Practical Guide to Wine Grape Growing](#) by Cliff Ohmart, and [Authentic Wine: toward natural and sustainable winemaking](#) by Jamie Goode (author of The Science of Wine) and Sam Harrop.

Yikes! Another New Bug: The calls starting coming in early September, first from some growers, and then from entomologists at USDA and university research faculty. I was aware of Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) because it had caused a stir in the Pacific Northwest in 2010 but I did not realize that it was right on our doorstep. 2011 was a drosophila kind of vintage because of all the rain, berry splitting and fruit rots, which made it a horrendous fruit fly year. SWD is one of many types of fruit flies but it can cause significant damage to fruit crops and, because it is a late season pest, has implications for wine grape quality and production. There is anecdotal evidence that fruit flies can spread the late season rot organisms and, if this is so, they are a clear and present threat that can be added to the birds, grape berry moth, yellow jackets and all the other post-veraison worries to the grower. Fortunately, researchers are already examining the biology of SWD and will surely have management recommendations for us in 2012. Kathy Demchak is the small fruits extension specialist at Penn State and her growers had to deal with SWD head on this year. For background information about SWD, please read her article (with Alex Surcica and David Biddinger): [Spotted Wing Drosophila – What We Learned in 2011](#).

ASEV Eastern Section Research Abstracts: I wish more growers were interested in the amazing viticulture research that is going on all around us. At the annual [American Society for Enology and Viticulture Eastern Section](#) conference held in Baltimore in 2011, graduate students and faculty presented their research projects. Making great wine is a collaborative effort and if industry and academia work together, we can make faster progress towards better and more consistent wines. All too often, both side huddle in their bunkers and don't interact, which impedes progress. Growers

should be much more engaged with what their land-grant researchers are doing, because it is for the wine industry that this work is being done. The [national ASEV](#) recently published the research abstracts from the Eastern Section conference in the *American Journal for Enology and Viticulture* (62:4, 2011), and I was reminded what a great conference we had this year. I tried to summarize the highlights of the abstracts in [ASEV Eastern Research Abstracts](#), but you really need to be a MEMBER of ASEV National and ASEV Eastern Section so you can have access to this great information through the journal. If you consider yourself a wine making professional, this is your professional association and you need to support it, for its benefit and yours! Don't forget to read [Bibiana Guerra's viticulture research abstracts](#) too.

5 New and Outstanding Viticulture Articles: An important part of my job is to sort through the reams of viticulture information that arrive in every form of media and try to identify the good stuff that will benefit your vineyard and, hopefully make you a better wine grower. Here are a few that I recently read and really enjoyed:

- [Automating Measurements of Canopy and Fruit to Map Crop Load in Commercial Vineyards.](#) Terry Bates, et al. Cornell University, Western New York. Terry describes where the future of canopy and crop management is going, using side scanning NDVI and laser range scanners to measure canopy and crop size will help growers to make mid-season adjustments that will improve grape and wine quality. This stuff is super cool, especially the mapping technology. Hopefully it can be scaled down to small vineyard affordability and practicality.
- [2011 Alternative Weed Management Program.](#) Alice Wise and Libby Tarleton, Cornell University, Long Island. When it comes to practical viticulture research, no one beats Alice Wise. Her weed management trial is in its fourth year using combinations of mowing and Roundup treatments to the vine strip, and the results are not always what one might expect but the details of her project are interesting. This research along with the vineyard floor research that Tony Wolf is doing, demonstrates many possibilities for alternative methods of weed and floor management.
- [Viticulture Notes](#) (December, 2011), Tony Wolf, Virginia Tech. This is one of the most informative regional newsletters, much more precise and concise than mine. In this issue Tony focuses on dormant pruning, the 2011 AREC spray program, the new Virginia vineyard site evaluation tool, grapevine yellows research news, and bird management. I would direct special attention to the spray program, which is a model of efficiency and efficacy in a very tough year (start and finish), and with the exception of fruit rot sprays, should be a sound guide to a successful disease management program in the region.
- [Getting the Veg Out: Trying to avoid veggie character in fruit during a cool, wet growing season.](#) [Mark Greenspan](#) in the December, 2011 issue of Wine Business Monthly (printed with permission). Western wine regions were stunned by a gigantic La Nina that brought the coolest and wettest weather in memory. Needless to say, it would barely cause a yawn here. It's interesting to read about the arid viticulture response to these conditions, including vigor and methoxy-pyrazine management.
- [Vineyard Development: Principles, Problems and Perspectives.](#) [James Stamp](#) in the December, 2011 issue of Wine Business Monthly (printed with permission). James sees a lot of new vineyards go into the ground in California and so he understands the problems that a new grower can encounter. His focus is on proper site evaluation, vineyard design with a particular emphasis on correct rootstock assignment, proper site preparation, and finally planting technique. James evaluates nursery materials for new vineyards.

Note: I am grateful to Cyril Penn at [Wine Business Monthly](#), Alice Wise and Terry Bates at Cornell University, and Tony Wolf from Virginia Tech for allowing me to share their work with you. I consider *Viticulture Notes*, *Long Island Fruit and Vegetable Update*, *Finger Lakes Vineyard Update* and the *Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Crop Update* to be essential reading for commercial wine growers.

Learn How to Tweet – Social Media Training from Penn State: I made a wonderful discovery last year. There is actually a faculty member in the Penn State Department of Horticulture whose job it is to help farmers sell stuff. Holy cow! You mean we actually have to sell the grapes/wine? Kathy Kelley is a remarkable resource, someone who really understands modern agricultural marketing and the value of social media to the business of small farms. From my reading, wine consumers are particularly open to using and receiving information via these new tools. Kathy will be offering an 8 part webinar series called *Learn How Social Media, Mobile Apps, and Other Technologies Can Help Your Business*. You will learn how to develop a social media strategy, create high quality content for social media, how to reach out to mobile customers, how to take payments via mobile devices, how to use the MarketMaker mobile app, how to manage your reputation in social media, and tool to manage your social media account. The cost is only \$10 per person for all eight sessions. For all the details, please go to <http://www.cvent.com/d/lcq890>.

Changes at Penn State Extension: There has been a lot going on at University Park in the recent past. The wine industry should be aware of changes that are being made to the structure and function of the cooperative extension system. The viticulture and enology programs are statewide and already fit comfortably into the context of the new extension landscape, which is designed to serve ag industries at the state level. I do not envision the programs that Denise and I offer will change very much. However, we would like our audience to understand the transformation happening to the College of Agricultural Sciences and the extension service. You can read more about it at [Penn State Extension: A New Vision](#). Please call me if you have any questions.

Please check the **2012 viticulture and enology regional events calendar** under the [EVENTS](#) tab of the Pennsylvania Wine Grape Network website. It is getting full of great educational opportunities. We are still scheduling Pennsylvania event dates and places, they will be finalized in the next viticulture e-newsletter.

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