

WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

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The American Society of Enology and Viticulture held its annual conference in Seattle two weeks ago. Some very interesting research was presented that is very pertinent to Eastern wine growing. I was lucky to go to the Pacific Northwest and have attached my notes from some of the sessions I attended.

The Season so Far: In Southeast Pennsylvania it has been dry for a month. I know a potentially good wine vintage is developing when the corn growers start complaining about lack of rain and the grass in my yard is turning a nice shade of light brown. I sort of have that 2007 feeling but we are only half way to harvest, almost at lag phase (seed coat hardening), which is a good time to estimate crop. As a grower in Oregon where the weather is also fickle, I learned you do not think about September in July (or at least not out loud). Not that the weather has been completely generous. Big storms have rolled through some areas and hail damage has been reported in some southeastern vineyards. Fortunately, mostly dry and sunny weather followed which helped to limit the spread of disease. I have seen only minor powdery mildew, downy mildew and black rot in vineyards and the vineyards look clean which after fruit set is a great place to be. Vine vigor has slowed somewhat with the dry conditions but it certainly was present heading into bloom and lots of canopy managing was necessary to keep the shoots where they belonged. Fruit set was variable between areas and varieties. It's seems so long ago with the current dry conditions but remember that the weather at bloom was cool and wet, which can affect the outcome of the bloom period. We started the growing season early in April with a heat spike and have maintained our advantage in growing degree days. Most growers seem to agree that we are a week to 10 days ahead of normal (whatever that is). At the Reading Airport heat accumulation for Ap/Ma/Jun is 300 GDD ahead of the same period in 2009. Despite these numbers I would not suggest that growers hang a big crop on the vines. While the size and nature of the fruit quality window varies with wine price and style, there are too many compelling reasons to seek moderation in yield such as cold hardiness, reduction of methoxypyrazine formation, vine health and wine quality to name a few. In the ASEV article I reported on the methoxypyrazine research by Dr. Gavin Sacks and other scientists at Cornell. Now is the time to open the fruit zone with proper leaf and lateral removal and hedging and to regulate crop size to achieve a balanced vine. Japanese beetles may or may not be on their way into the vineyard so scout and use methods and materials with the least environmental impact. A dry year may benefit fruit quality and not hamper older vines but I worry about new vines especially if full cover crops have been planted. It's hard to stress enough how much cover crops

compete for water and nutrients with vines, especially shallow rooted new vines. Growers with new vineyards need to be ready to water their vines. If they are stressed too much it will hamper their development, most certainly for this year and possibly for many years to come. In the meantime, I'm going to keep hanging around the corn growers for the latest weather report.

PA Viticulture Loop Tour: Next week (Monday-Friday) Kevin Ker, Andy Muza and I will be on our tour of vineyards in the northern tier and southwest PA. You are welcome to join us at any of these sites. Kevin is from Ontario and is extremely knowledgeable about issues that confront cold climate wine growers as well as being an outstanding viticulturist. This is a great opportunity to pick his brain. Our meetings will be mostly free-form discussion and Q&A so please bring your best questions and ideas to share with us and the other growers present. You should contact the host extension educator in your region: Bill Pencek, Bill Waltman, Andy Muza or Lee Young to pre-register. See attachment for schedule and contacts.

The Bordeaux viticulture workshop with Jean-Philippe Roby is almost filled but you can still be placed on a waiting list. If you are from Pennsylvania and wish to attend you can still register and please do so right away by calling 717.394.6851.

Disease Management Recommendations from Long Island: I rely heavily on my colleague Alice Wise, the extension viticulturist at Cornell's LIHREC for information and recommendations on disease and pest control. Last week she sent out a bulletin on post-infection disease management. While we are having a low pressure disease situation so far this year that can change overnight and if big canopies are present, it would be wise to scout their interiors to see what may be lurking in the dark and damp interiors. Alice's recommendations are offered here with her permission. I would recommend a visit to her web site at <http://ccesuffolk.org/viticulture/> See attachment.