

WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

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COLD: Well, here we go again. In recent years it always seems that mid-January has cold snaps that create problems for vines. While there is really nothing a grower can do at this point to protect the vines (extra visits to church might help) but there are some practices that can help you later this season. Prune the cold tender varieties last. No vinifera vines should be pruned yet. Begin with the natives and progress to hybrids based on the relative value of the crop. Assess bud injury (see attachment from Cornell) and leave extra buds for crop insurance. When it comes to buds, it is always better to keep too many now and adjust later than wish later that you had more. This is the hard part about Eastern viticulture, trying to create and maintain vine and vineyard uniformity under these conditions. Canopy management in the summer is a nightmare if only half of the buds on a cane are viable. But we go with the flow in this wine region and are reminded all too often of why proper canopy, crop, and fertility management are so essential in the previous season, not just for good fruit but for a sturdy, cold hardy vine in the winter. From the Finger Lakes data, it would appear that we have pretty good cold hardiness with an average LT50 on Riesling of -12.5F and -10.4F for Cabernet Franc (measured on 1/6, see attached data sheet). We can only hope it will start to warm up and stay warmer. For more information about winter injury and cold hardiness, please refer to the recent publication: *Winter Injury to Grapevines and Methods of Protection* available from Michigan State University Press at <http://www.emdc.msue.msu.edu/viewitem.cfm?INVKEY=E2930>. It is available in .pdf at <http://www.emdc.msue.msu.edu/Bulletin/PDF/E2930.pdf>

Good Grower: The results of the PA Farm Show and PA Wine Society wine competitions are in and there is one winery that has excelled in both, Pinnacle Ridge Vineyards in Kutztown. To me, it is no surprise. Owner and wine grower Brad Knapp is as meticulous a grower as you can find anywhere. He farms his vineyard on a south slope visible from I-78 and also maintains a textbook grower-winery relationship with Round Ridge Vineyards. Brad sends me during the harvest with cluster number and weight information as he monitors the crop until moments before harvest. His vines are well-maintained during the growing season with good canopy balance and fruit zone treatments. He is very fussy about the quality of his viticulture. Chambourcin, for example, is thinned to one cluster per shoot on VSP and yields wines of vinifera-like quality and character. Like many winegrowers Brad is self taught but he exemplifies the unique characteristics that can take a vineyard and its wines to the next level... an insatiable curiosity and desire to learn - he's always asking why and seeking knowledge

that will provide answers, a keen sense of observation and ability to collect data and translate them into management practices, a willingness to bring in outside experts for advice and help, a great passion for wine growing and finally the ability to execute in the vineyard and cellar. I would encourage fellow wine growers to taste Brad's wines, they are setting benchmarks for quality for Pennsylvania. In the interest of full disclosure, most of the wines that made the final round in the PWS tasting, including those from Pinnacle Ridge, contained fruit grown by Jan and Kim Waltz in Manheim. Their reputation for high quality grapes is well known and the results here simply help to acknowledge their tremendous efforts in the vineyard.

<http://www.pinridge.com/>

http://waltzvineyards.com/Home_Page.html

PAW: The Pennsylvania Association of Winegrowers had its annual meeting at Clover Hill Vineyards and Winery on Thursday. As usual, the Skrip family was the consummate host and PAW and I thank them for the use of their facilities. Soils and soil health were the theme and we had an excellent cast of speakers on hand to address the 50+ wine growers. Dr Terry Bates explained his Variety x Rootstock x Soil pH research that has yielded fascinating results and illuminated how soil chemistry, rootstocks and varieties interact in mostly subtle but sometimes dramatic ways. Suffice to say, the proper choice and amendments are an essential part of final wine quality and it is not something a grower should just guess at. In certain situations, for example, the use of Riparia Gloire or 3309C will dramatically effect wine quality. The beauty of Terry's work is that there are wines to sample and analyze and these tell the complete story. For the record, I had a Traminette he produced and even though it was a micro-vinification research wine it was one of the best I have ever tried. The effects of soil pH can influence vine size and health and impact wine quality and since pH can vary according to depth, rootstocks add another layer of complexity as will the natural growth habit of a particular variety such as Riesling vs. Cabernet Sauvignon. There are very complex relationships here but Terry was able to illuminate them in a way that makes sense and can be translated into practical decisions. James Fisher is a soil scientist who has been working with vineyards since 2000, including many of the best names in Pennsylvania (could there be a correlation here?). James gave 2 talks, the first focused on the incredibly complex, yet elegant phenomenon of soil moisture and drainage. We all understand the importance of drainage but did you know that it can all be explained in mathematical equations? These equations are made real by soil structure and texture, evapotranspiration, precipitation and all the inputs and outputs that influence the soil and plant water status balance. It was weighty material but important to understand that there is a connection between mathematical constructs and viticulture. In his second talk he gave a concrete example of how understanding your soil and vine chemistry can directly impact vine health and fruit quality. He helped one of our best vineyards to solve a nagging nutritional problem that was affecting their grape quality. It is detective work that only a soil scientist could perform with recommendations that can have a positive impact on wine quality. Steve Groff is an innovative and creative vegetable grower in Lancaster County who has been fascinated by soils for decades. Like Marty Keen and his interest in Grape Root Borer,

Steve has used Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NESARE) farmer grant funds to study his soils and improve their health and productivity. Steve talked to us about the benefits of cover crops and opened our eyes to the wide range of cover options that are available and the variety of benefits they can bring to a soil. In vineyards we tend to focus only on grass covers to manage erosion, control vine vigor, and allow access to the vineyard in wet conditions but there is so much more that covers can do. He highlighted his use of a turnip to "till" the soil and reduce compaction. There are many cover crops that can be used to improve soil fertility, organic matter and structure. It is an important area for sustainable and organic farmers but not used to its best benefit in our vineyards. For us it is still a researchable topic but Steve helped to open our eyes to the possibilities. Finally, a grower panel consisting of Galen Troxell from Galen Glen (Schuykill), Carl Helrich from Allegro (York), Stan Sowinski from Endless Mountains (Lackawanna), and Bill Zimmerman from Shade Mountain (Snyder) provided an excellent panel of some of our best growers to answer a long list of practical questions about the 2008 growing season. Stan presented a slide show of his over the vineyard netting that he has used with great success to exclude birds and other wildlife at harvest. There was a lot of very practical and sage advice dispensed during this session. It would have benefited any grower to have heard it. The PAW business meeting produced a new board. Rich Blair from Blair Vineyards (Berks) continues to be its fearless leader. Other board members include David Othmer (Haywagon in Chester), David Hoffman (Paradox in Chester), Ed Jansen (Jansen in Perry), Elwin Stewart (Happy Valley in Centre), Bill Zimmerman (Shade Mountain in Snyder), Susan Anderson (Stewart in York). I would encourage other growers to get involved with PAW. These folks work hard behind the scenes to promote your business interests. In addition, there was the usual fellowship and networking, as well as tasting of Clover Hill wines. It was a fine event on a very cold day in Breinigsville. We thank everyone who came and helped to organize the meeting. Next up will be the summer vineyard walk around in August. If you haven't joined PAW, please contact Ed Jansen at 717-944-2410 to become a member.

My computer crashed big time the day after the meeting. For those of you who were there, I apologize profusely for the poor quality of projection of the speaker power point presentations. I am hoping to have all of the talks posted on the wine grape network web site. When I get them up, I'll let everyone know and you can visit them on your computer.

Terry Bates' presentation on his variety x rootstock x soil pH is available on the web at [http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/Bates/Reports/2008\(c\)BatesWinegrapeProgress.pdf](http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/Bates/Reports/2008(c)BatesWinegrapeProgress.pdf)

If you did not attend the PAW meeting, could you please write to me and tell me why you did not attend and what we might be able to do in the future to encourage your attendance at educational meetings such as this. I feel strongly that the information dispensed at this meeting would help any winegrower, new or veteran. In the most sincere way, I would like more of our growers to attend meetings and learn, and to know what we can do to make it worth your time and effort to participate. Thank you.

Attachments:

[Grapevine Bud Hardiness Jan09.doc](#)

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