

## WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

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Just in case you missed all the announcements... the Pennsylvania Wine Association is hosting their annual meeting at the Wyndham Harrisburg-Hershey today and tomorrow. There are a lot of tough issues facing the wine community in Pennsylvania affecting wine producers and grape growers alike. I think everyone who has a stake in the future of this industry should attend and participate in the solution to difficult problems and the further growth of our industry. So come down to the Wyndham Hotel and enjoy the company of your fellow winegrowers, interesting talks and good food and wine!

### They're Here!

Here are the 2 most important reference resources for commercial grape growers each year. The Pest Management Guidelines are a complete compilation of disease and pest recommendations by Cornell and Penn State researchers and extension personnel. It is really the bible of pest management and should be the foundation for any IPM program. It also includes calibration information

The new edition of the 2006 NY/PA Pest Management Guidelines for Grapes is now available. Pennsylvania grape growers can pick up a copy at their local county extension office. The cost is \$10 at the counter or \$15 to have it mailed to you. This is a significantly updated guide with the latest products and recommendations. I suggest that growers update their issue every year. As we head onto the battlefield with fungi, bugs and all the other vineyard pests, this is an essential tool for any commercial grape grower. Clean fruit is one of the most basic essentials to making good wine. This guide will help you to keep it clean and bring smiles to your wine makers at harvest! The book can also be ordered on-line at <http://legacy.cce.cornell.edu/store/customer/product.php?productid=16195>.

Dr. Wayne Wilcox is the Cornell University grape pathologist at the NY State Agricultural Research Station in Geneva. Each year Wayne composes his disease "magnum opus" that is a key supplement to the NY/PA guide. It should be considered an essential partner and contains vital and current information on new products, disease resistance, new and revised labeling, disease biology and the ever important "Putting it All Together" section that outlines a viable fungicide spray program and much more. Most of you already know about it and how important it is. For those who do not, read it cover to cover, word for word. I just cannot imagine a better resource for growers in this

region. Please note that spray material registrations may differ in Pennsylvania.

Okay, it has started to rain. I remember this kind of spring weather very well from Oregon and it used to drive us nuts. Shoots would come out 3-5" then the cool weather hits and they just sit there for seemingly weeks on end. While the cool temps helped to keep disease at bay, we would get "spring fever" or mild K deficiency which turned the leaves a dull to yellowish-green color. But as soon as it warms up, the color returns and growth takes off with a vengeance. Be prepared for this with your spray program. Right now, even with the cool weather, you want to be protected against phomopsis. You might also see leaf and cluster botrytis showing up. There isn't a lot to do about tit now, but it is a red flag waving at you about potential hazards later in the season. Pay attention. Up until now it has been very dry. Growers I have talked to are already extending their spray intervals. This is a good thing. Although scouting your vines will help you to identify existing, where disease is concerned, prevention is everything. Follow the advice of Ashley Meyers, the pathologist at Virginia Tech and scout your vines up close and personal, not from a tractor or ATV seat. This is where experience and intuition counts along with a reliable source of weather forecasting. As we approach bloom, greater caution and spray application rigor is needed. This is the critical protection period. Have a plan and be ready to adjust according to the weather.

I wish we were Mendocino or Chile where organic viticulture is almost as easy as 1-2-3. But we are not and the use of chemicals for disease and pest control are an unfortunate reality of the business. But (and you know what is coming), every grape grower needs to move towards a sustainable form of viticulture by lowering off-farm inputs as much as is practically possible. As with all disease management programs, chemistry is not the answer and absolutely no substitute for the best possible canopy management practices that you can perform in your vineyard. Proper canopy management has so many benefits in addition to helping disease control. It is the "integrated" part of IPM and should be taken just as seriously as the spray materials. So "Sunlight into Wine" should be used just as much as the NY/PA and Wilcox reference guides. Shoot thinning, shoot positioning, top and bottom suckering should all be done as we head into the grand period of growth.

A grower called me and said his vineyard was hit by up to 2" hail stones last week. I remember the first time I experienced this. I thought the vineyard would die. The shredded leaves look ugly but vines are resilient and they will come back. It is not unlike a frost event and better early in the season than later. If it's not too late, you may want to adjust bud numbers or shoot thinning practices to account for the potential loss of fruit. Just be sure to do an accurate crop estimate to know what the vines are carrying into veraison. In fact, once the canopy is developed, you won't even know it happened. My experience is that the secondary shoots are less fruitful so yields will be reduced. But it is important to maintain your spray program. Give the vines a chance to grow back and hope that this doesn't happen close to harvest.

Laser Planting

I recently had the pleasure and privilege to visit a new vineyard being developed in Montgomery County. Nelson Stewart is the vineyard manager and this promises to be an exciting new winery project in SE PA. 12 acres of vineyards are being planted in this first phase with an assortment of high quality clones of Bordeaux reds as well as clones of Chardonnay. Lucie Morton has been advising on the project and it is being planted on 7'3"x3' spacing, over 2000 vines per acre, which is a relatively new concept here. Drain tile has been put in place and drip irrigation is being installed in five zones. What was most impressive on this planting day was the laser planting machine hired by Nelson and owned and operated by Ken Whitty and Cameron Hosmer. Ken and Cameron are perfectionists and if you use their services you are guaranteed to have straight rows in any possible direction in which you view the vineyards. It was important to the owner that the vineyard looked good and while it is hard to quantify the impact of aesthetics in viticultural terms, I have little doubt that it enhance overall uniformity of the vineyard which, over time, will benefit the quality of the fruit. Straight rows benefit both machine and hand operations, increasing ease and efficiency. It looks nice and who doesn't want a vineyard that looks good? The secret to successful planting is to prepare the ground properly according to Ken's exact specifications and to have a few key layout points designated when he comes to mark the perimeter and rows. It is really an easy process and the results could not be more impressive. Vines are root pruned to about 6" and brought to the field in containers filled with water. The planter is 3-pt mounted and the laser equipment is on the tractor. Ken lines it up and drives while two men feed the conveyor that plants the vines. Again, uniformity is almost absolute, each vine going in straight and at the same depth with the soil being packed back evenly. The laser planter costs more than other ways of planting but, on an acceptable site, simply cannot be beat for quality of the end product. In the barn, Lucie was there evaluating, testing and pruning the nursery stock to prepare them for planting. The critical graft union "bending" test was performed and failed vines were set aside. The work took place in a cool, open barn and roots were always kept moist. Lucie also kept a sharp eye open for vines with any sign of young vine fungal disorders. This kind of attention to detail makes sure that only healthy vines end up in the ground.

Laser planting clearly isn't for everyone. I've planted thousands of vines using shovel and auger with fine results. And it doesn't work well on steep slopes or rocky soils. But most of our vineyards aren't subject to those conditions. It is certainly easier than organizing and supervising a big planting crew. It takes one of the most critical tasks in new vineyard development and mechanizes it for uniformity and quality. If you want a "serious" vineyard that will go the distance in style, then this is the way to plant. As is usually the case, the professionals know what they are doing and do a great job. I'm already looking forward to trying the wines.

#### Need Grape Lugs? From Jeff White in Virginia...

I'm ordering Ropak TB-30 berry lugs, through Herb Barber and Sons. They are \$7.42 to \$7.67 each, depending on how many pallets are ordered, plus shipping. We can save on freight if we team up. Tell people to call Sue Shearer at (800) 388-5384 and reference me, to order. Shipping will be around \$100 per pallet plus \$50 per drop so I thought a central PA drop and then a drop here in Va. It takes about three weeks for delivery once the order is complete and I'm

hoping to receive the lugs by August 1.

More Red Wine Blending...

The French know about blending wines. In my humble opinion, over time, red wine blends will excel in Eastern winegrowing. We just had Lucien Guillemet from Chateau Boyd-Cantenac lead a wine blending workshop at Linden Vineyards. Now, Michel Rolland, the flying winemaker from Bordeaux who consults for many fine wine estates around the globe is giving a lecture titled "New Trends in Oenology". Monsieur Rolland was the central figure in the movie "Mondovino". He clearly has one of the most refined palates in our business and a knack for putting together the pieces of the blending puzzle with outstanding results. The date is June 4 at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, VA. For more information and tickets please call Eric Loving at 434-961-5495 or eloving@pvcc.edu.

**Attachments:**

[Grape\\_Disease\\_Control\\_2006\\_DrWayne\\_Wilcox\\_May2006.pdf](#)

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