

# WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

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### **Vintage Update**

This season feels distinctly like Oregon with very unpredictable weather. We just can't seem to catch a streak of sun and dry. I was out in vineyard last week and here are a few observations.... it's important for grape growers not to think that you are the only one being affected by the plague no matter what form it appears to be. In this case, powdery mildew, botrytis, ripe rot, birds or whatever is going on out there I assure you.... YOU ARE NOT ALONE!!! Granted, disease control varies according to site and grower skill but everyone is in the same fight. It is easy to feel isolated in your vineyard oasis, especially at crunch time. I suggest you take a break and visit your neighbor. Chardonnay appears to be consistently a problem variety this season with powdery mildew and bunch rots taking down fruit. I have heard of similar chard troubles from other regions. I think we need to consider this problem as an industry this winter and figure out what went wrong and how to fix it. Yes, the world has too much Chardonnay but no individual vineyard wants to lose too much. Where I saw improvement in Chardonnay conditions were in vineyard with exceptional canopy management. Okay, here is where the broken record starts - as Dr. Travis said so succinctly - spray programs are a supplement to good canopy management practices. I think we all know that but so many things get in the way of execution from labor and cash shortages to ill-timed vacations. We also learned at the walk around that spray programs - timing, rates, coverage, material choice, etc. are all incredibly important to successful disease management in a year like this one. It just is. Ernesto was bad but Florence was the real disappointment to me. What was advertised as a brief passing storm stood still over Lancaster for 36 hrs and dumped warm, steady tropical rain. We have had some gorgeous sunny, dry and breezy days but not enough. It is amazing how quickly these conditions can arrest the development of rots. Sun is the silver bullet. But we haven't had quite enough of it. Again, canopy and fruit zone open. As the days cool down temperature around the fruit becomes more critical (see Enology Notes #118, just out) and exposing berries to sunlight warms them dramatically. They need every ray of sun and associated heat to push enzyme activity needed to develop critical secondary metabolites responsible for color and phenolics, especially in red varieties (in Oregon, in a year like this, the fruit zone gets stripped of leaves late). This helps with disease control as well. Grapes are ripening at lower sugars this season, typical for cool and rainy vintages. Don't expect 24 brix in any of the reds. But flavors are good and sugar can always be adjusted. Watch the flavors most intently, they are your guide this year. The trick is to balance flavor development with level of disease. At some point you

either lose the ability to make a good wine from diseased grapes or you have lost so much fruit it kills the economics of making wine. This is a delicate balance and only you can decide where the balance point on the fulcrum lies. Fortunately, we have some tough varieties as the mainstays of our industry including Chambourcin and Vidal. They both looked pretty good on the vines but Chambourcin, in particular, has a long way to go. I was mostly getting sugars from 17-19. Crop thinning, early, was a definite benefit this year. Crop thinning now - unripe berries, will still yield benefits to wines - as will sorting grapes. Sort however, whenever and wherever - in the field and on the crush pad. Sorting will likely define this vintage. Those who do have a chance at pretty nice wines. Those who don't, well, talk to any wine grower in Burgundy or Bordeaux - our closest climate cousins, for the answer. Do what you can. Birds. Don't just look at them. Chase them! As I approached one vineyard I heard the birds from a half mile away. There must be a strategy to deal with them. Why work for 7-8 months and let it all go away in the week before harvest? We need indian summer now. I couldn't help but note the irony of the lead article in the recent Wine Spectator about the effects of global warming on viticulture. It's the topic du jour. Well, it's not here yet so we have to deal with the traditional challenges.

### **New Grower Workshop in Maryland**

Dr. Tony Wolf (Virginia Tech), Mark Chien (Penn State), and Drs. Anne DeMarsay and Joe Fiola (Univ of Maryland) and are offering a one-day regional workshop for beginner and prospective grape growers in the Mid-Atlantic. This course offers a broad overview of commercial vineyard development from pre-plant planning into the third year including economics and marketing information, variety, clone and rootstock choices, site selection and preparation, pre-plant decisions, equipment and supply requirements as well as all the basics ordering and planting vines and tending your vines through their third year of growth of training, disease, pest and weed control and canopy management best practices. This seminar is not a substitute for your own learning initiatives or any extended training or education you may have an opportunity to acquire, but it is a good overview of what is involved with getting a commercial vineyard started in the Mid-Atlantic region. If you are considering planting a vineyard, or you have just recently done so, you will benefit from the information provided in this course. The workshop is classroom format with lots of time for Q&A; with an opportunity for a vineyard demonstration at the end. Registration and information are attached.

When: Thursday, October 12, 2006  
Place: Western Maryland Research and education Center in Keedysville, Maryland. WMREC is located in Washington County (near Antietam Battlefield), easily accessible from the surrounding states (please see attached directions).  
Time: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Cost: \$135 (This includes lunch, breaks and handouts)

Note: A new grower workshop will also be offered at Zorvino Vineyard in Sandown, NH on November 2, 2006. Call Sonia Schloemann for information at 413-545-4347

## **The People Who Do the Work for You**

We have three very important industry associations that work quietly behind the scenes to make your business better. Sometimes, it's a little too quiet. I try to attend the board meetings and it is amazing and gratifying to see the work they are doing and the tough issues each group confronts every time they meet.

- The Pennsylvania Wine Association represents most of the wineries in the state. They lobby, promote and market on behalf of the wineries but in reality for everyone in the broader wine community, including grape growers. They work on critical issues such as direct shipping, wine industry funding, managing festivals, creating marketing and promotion opportunities, etc. PWA helps to fund your state-wide extension enologist.
- The Pennsylvania Association of Winegrowers represents all the wine grape growers in Pennsylvania including the estate vineyards. They provide information and educational opportunities to grape growers. They help to fund the state-wide extension wine grape educator.
- The Pennsylvania Wine Marketing and Research Program is the marketing order for the wine industry administered by PDA but run by members of the wine industry. They utilize the program charge on wine to fund marketing and promotion projects and research and education projects.

These organizations and the amazing people who make them run are essential to the health, well-being and progress of this industry. The list goes way back to the beginning of the modern PA wine industry in the 60's and many have served with devotion. Everyone in the industry should be grateful for their efforts, whether or not you agree with everything the organization is doing. Pennsylvania does not yet have the benefit of a significant amount of legislative funding that pays for people to work on behalf of our industry. Jennifer Eckinger, now the executive director of PWA is the only full-time paid person working to represent our industry. Others like the irrepressible Fran O'Brien, our lobbyist, work quietly and effectively in Harrisburg. Then we have the industry members who take time from their busy schedules and lives to devote energy and talent to the benefit of their business and yours. This is nothing but hard work taking on the politics and business of the wine industry. It is truly a thankless and anonymous job that I wish we were all able to appreciate more visibly. It happens in all successful wine regions, only a little slower in Pennsylvania. If anyone can explain why, please call me. I have compiled a list of the people who are currently serving the needs of the wine community. There are many others who have done so in the past and others who work steadily and quietly behind the scenes. I urge all the newcomers to the industry to get involved and help make us collectively successful. See that attached list of outstanding individuals, it is by no means complete but represents those who are currently serving.

## **Vineyard Manager Wanted**

Jan and Kim Waltz are looking for a vineyard manager. The 15 acre vineyard is located in Manheim about 10 miles north of Lancaster. It is one of the best vineyards in

Pennsylvania and they are among our finest wine growers. A job description is attached. Please contact them directly if you are interested.

**COME LIVE & LEARN IN THE MEDOC - YOU DESERVE IT!**

An American enologist and vine grower (Bordeaux trained, 15 years experience), owner of a small farm in the Medoc, is seeking to temporarily replace a vine grower, cellar worker or technician at his/her job in the U.S. while that person house sits on his property near Bordeaux for one to three months. Peace and quiet with vine and wine learning assured. For more information, drop an e-line or two to: Stefan Meadow at 'le Pergeat' Medoc, France. stemedw@hotmail.com

**Attachments:**

- [Md new gr wks info reg.doc](#)
- [Md new gr wks prog Oct06.doc](#)
- [Pennsylvania organizations\\_07.doc](#)
- [Waltz vyd mgr position.doc](#)

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