



## **FINGER LAKES VINEYARD NOTES**

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#### **DISEASE AND INSECT UPDATES**

David Peterson

With bud break running almost 2 weeks later than average for some varieties, many growers were instantly concerned that harvest will be late. Warmer temperatures in recent weeks, however, helped vines catch up and we entered bloom less than a week later than average in most varieties. Early blooming varieties enjoyed generally warm and dry conditions, although Concord and other mid-season varieties were in full bloom at the time of this writing (and it was raining). Disease pressure has been significant and growers with weak programs are likely to have problems. Poor coverage is an even more widespread problem than poor material choice or extended interval problems. Many growers still are trying to use alternate row spraying at very low water volume through bloom, and consequently have problems whenever pressure is high. While alternate row sprays can give good coverage in early season as long as spray conditions are favorable, growers need to spray every row center at least by the immediate prebloom spray if they expect to get good coverage in most

vineyard canopies. You may get away with it some years and with some varieties, but I can't think of a single grower who successfully gets away with it year after year.

*Phomopsis* cane and leaf spot leaf lesions are common in many vineyards, which could spell trouble for growers who did not adequately protect clusters during bloom. While the impact of the leaf lesions themselves may not be serious in most cases, fruit rots near harvest that can result from bloom infections could be significant. I also saw powdery mildew this week for the first time this season, so growers should be on the lookout for it. If significant infections are seen, the best approach is probably to hit them with JMS Stylet Oil before the problem becomes serious. This material has worked well in eradicating existing infections when the problem has been caught early. If infections progress too far, however, you can only hope to slow the spread. Some leaf toxicity was seen when JMS Stylet Oil was sprayed on very hot days, so use it early in the day or in the evening (if daytime temperatures exceed 85°F.) Stylet Oil also has several restrictions on which materials it cannot be used with and intervals between sprays of other

materials. Be sure to check the 1996 *New York and Pennsylvania Pest Management Recommendations for Grapes* and the label for details. Spraying sterol-inhibiting fungicides on existing infections is not recommended since this increases the chances of the buildup of pest resistance. Sulfur can be used if you have existing infections, although it is less effective than Stylet Oil in eradicating them. Downy mildew is also expected to be a potentially serious problem this year given the recent weather pattern. Mancozeb, captan, copper and lime, Ridomil MZ and Ridomil Cu are all highly effective against downy mildew. Growers with processor restrictions on the use of captan and mancozeb should not rely on ferbam to control downy mildew with susceptible varieties under significant disease pressure. Ridomil is eradicator on existing infections, although using it as an eradicator instead of as a protectant will increase the chances of a buildup of resistance.

Eastern Grape Leafhoppers have been noticeable in many area vineyards, although damage has been minor to date. Presence of leafhoppers should not automatically dictate the need for a spray. In fact, populations in many vineyards seemed to drop somewhat (based on reports over the past several days). There are several possible explanations for this observation, including the presence of natural biological controls such as *Anagrus epos*, which has been discussed at numerous meetings over the past few years. Damage from potato leafhoppers has been observed in some vineyards over the past week or two. This injury is very different from that caused by Eastern Grape Leafhopper. Potato leafhopper injury is characterized by yellowing and downward curling of the leaves around the outside edges. The first grape berry moth spray (for those vineyards requiring one) should be targeted for 10 days after 50% bloom. Depending on the timing of your sprays, this would be in the first or second post-bloom spray. It is probably better to be a few days early than late. The 10 day post-bloom spray for berry moth is also effective against leafhoppers. Consult the 1996 *New York and Pennsylvania Pest Management Recommendations for Grapes* and the pesticide label for more details and specific recommendations. Grape plume moth, the

early season insect that causes folding up of the shoot tip and leaves (and sometimes clusters) prior to bloom has only one generation per year, so there should be little reason to be targeting this insect in any sprays now. We have some trials out on plume moth this year to determine if this insect pest is causing significant injury to vines in the Finger Lakes. We will be reporting on our findings at some upcoming winter meetings.

## **MARKETS FOR NEW GRAPE PLANTINGS - RED WINE VARIETIES**

David V. Peterson

In an earlier article (Finger Lakes Vineyard Notes '96 #5) I discussed market potential for white wine varieties. Although the Finger Lakes continues to be known primarily for its white wines, interest in red wine has been growing in leaps and bounds. While much of the interest has been generated by numerous positive reports of health benefits of consuming red wine in moderation, wineries have also made remarkable progress in improving the quality of their red wines. At a joint meeting of the Seneca Lake Wine Trail and the NYS Wine Grape Growers Association in May, nearly every winery that spoke indicated that they had increased needs for red wine grapes, and it appears that there will be a shortage of high quality grapes of several varieties this year. Unfortunately, even varieties that have significant markets to premium wineries are still grown for the bulk wine market, and consequently often do not meet quality standards set by the premium industry. While this situation is probably best addressed through improved communications between growers and wineries to be sure that they are grown to meet the needs of the premium industry, many varieties are in short supply and need additional acreage planted. Basically all red *vinifera* varieties have inadequate acreage to meet winery demands, and many hybrids are in short supply as well.

**Cabernet Franc** is probably the most sought after red wine variety in the Finger Lakes right now. Virtually unheard of the region 5 or 6 years ago, it was placed in the limelight last Fall when a Cabernet Franc produced by

Standing Stone Vineyards in Seneca County won the Governor's Cup for "Best of Show" at the New York Wine Classic. Probably the most consistent performer in the vineyard of any *vinifera* variety, it endured the harsh winters a few years ago better than even Chardonnay and Riesling. Also one of the most bunch rot resistant of the *vinifera* varieties, the biggest question mark right now is "how big is the wine market for this variety?" While only a few wineries currently produce a varietal wine and a few more use it for premium blends, practically every winery indicates an interest in purchasing it. The major cautions are that wineries still need to establish themselves in the market place with this grape, and overcropping will lead to low quality wines that would hurt market growth. While it is capable of producing 6 or more tons per acre, it is late-ripening and will be unlikely to make high-quality wines at much more than 4 - 4.5 tons per acre in most years. Even so, prices were \$1300-\$1500 last year, which makes it an attractive choice for growers.

**Cabernet Sauvignon** was sought after almost as much as Cabernet Franc last year and demand is likely to continue to increase. Favorable growing seasons for much of this decade has resulted in high quality wines, this from a region that is often considered too cool for this variety. However, since it ripens even later than Cabernet Franc, crop control is even more important and some years are likely to produce marginal quality wines even with good production practices. In spite of this, the rewards are great in the good years, and wineries likely will continue to seek more of this variety. My opinion is that there will always be some demand for high quality Finger Lakes Cabernet Sauvignon, but it is unlikely to be one of the major red wine varieties of the future. It is less cold-hardy than Cabernet Franc and should be planted only on the most favorable Finger Lakes sites.

**Merlot** is the hottest red wine grape in the country today, and is highly sought after in the Finger Lakes as well. While wine quality is excellent in most years, it is considerably more cold-tender than Cabernet Sauvignon and is questionable for even the best Finger Lakes sites. Economics of producing this variety are risky for growers, and this may be a variety

that growers should let the wineries themselves plant if they really want it. Wineries may be more likely to profitably grow Merlot since they can sell it directly as wine. Even then, only the best sites should be chosen.

**Pinot Noir** was once considered the "great red hope" for the Finger Lakes, but there have been more disappointments than thrills. Progress in wine quality is encouraging, however, and growers and winemakers have gotten valuable experience. Pinot Noir has to be considered the world's biggest challenge to produce high quality wine, but when it's good, it's also perhaps the best there is. Future plantings of Pinot Noir in the Finger Lakes likely will be based on clonal evaluations being conducted by Dr. Bob Pool at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva. Dr. Pool's work thus far indicates that there are likely far better quality clones available than much of what has previously been planted here. Klevner Mariafeld and Clone 29 are two of the more promising ones from this trial, although several Burgundian clones may be even more desirable (but they have not been tested long enough to make recommendations on). Some of these more promising clones will likely be made available to growers in the next few years. For growers wishing to experiment on their own, Clones 113 and 115 from Burgundy are commercially available. Clone 7 (Frank clone) has performed well viticulturally on commercial sites, and wine quality has been good. Many wineries are indicating substantial interest in purchasing high quality Pinot Noir clones. Crop thinning is often necessary to produce high quality, and good fruit exposure to sunlight is essential to help control bunch rot. Growers would be well advised to plant several clones.

**Lemberger** has been among the most consistent high quality reds of any variety produced at the Geneva Station. Although it is less hardy than Cabernet Franc, it is a good producer on favorable sites. Its large clusters, however, make it prone to overcropping, and cluster thinning may be necessary in some years. Although market potential for varietal wines is probably more limited than for the other varieties previously discussed, its consistent high quality and usefulness for blending makes it attractive to many wineries.



**Gamay Noir** has also been a consistent performer in the vineyard and appears well suited to producing high quality lighter style red wines. Gamay Noir should not be confused with Gamay Beaujolais, which is actually a lower quality clone of Pinot Noir. Market potential for Gamay Noir is unknown, but some small plantings would likely be a safe bet.

There are many options for red hybrid wine varieties, and this group has made a comeback in the market in recent years. Although there are no clear favorites, most wineries feel that blends of these varieties are better than varietals.

**Chambourcin** has become the premier red hybrid in areas south of the Finger Lakes and is generating substantial interest here as well. Winter hardiness is lower than some of the other hybrid options and crop control is necessary to get ripe fruit, but prices and demand are high and it would be a good bet for favorable sites.

**Maréchal Foch** is an early ripening cold hardy hybrid with strong market demand. The major drawback is its attractiveness to birds, so fields with wooded edges or near power lines should be avoided. Grafting is recommended for some sites. A similar variety, **Léon Millot**, is more productive and somewhat easier to grow, although the market may not be quite as strong as for Maréchal Foch.

**Chancellor** has significant markets, but acreage has been reduced due to its viticultural problems. Extreme susceptibility to fungal diseases and sensitivity to both copper and sulfur fungicides limit its future.

**Baco Noir** has made a comeback in the past few years, and it is probably used by more Finger Lakes wineries than any other red hybrid. Excessive vigor, high acidity and virus problems may limit its future somewhat, however. Although there are a few new plantings, there is still some acreage grown for bulk markets that could be converted for the premium market.

**Rougeon** was basically ignored by most of the premium industry until the past few years. Many wineries have discovered, however, that it is capable of producing very pleasant lighter style early drinking wines with attractive color. Interest is increasing rapidly. While there is still adequate acreage around (much of which is being converted from bulk to premium markets), it is conceivable that new plantings may be needed in the future. For the time being, however, new plantings appear risky. The variety is quite productive and relatively easy to grow.

**DeChaunac** has been written off by most of the industry because of low quality, but most of the quality problems can be related to overcropping. The need for cluster thinning to get high quality and virus problems, along with its unfortunate reputation, probably will limit interest in new plantings.

Several minor varieties could also have potential for new plantings. **Landot Noir** (Landot 4511) is an older variety that showed good potential in the past, except for some virus problems. **GR 7**, a once promising selection from the breeding program at the Geneva Station, was never named because interest in red hybrids declined. Several wineries have expressed renewed interest in it, however. **NY 73.136.17** and **N Y 70.809.10** are advanced selections from the breeding program at Geneva that have been getting favorable ratings. These varieties have now been planted in extended trials in several Finger Lakes commercial vineyards and more vines are likely to be made available in the future.

**Vincent** and **Colobel** are varieties used almost exclusively for their deep stable color. Vincent makes better wine (on its own) than Colobel, although Colobel seems to have somewhat deeper color. Both are generally used in small quantities as parts of blends. Existing acreage probably is adequate to meet demand, although interest has been increasing. Vincent seems to have the better future of the two.

## **GETTING TO KNOW THE PROCESSORS - FIELD MEETINGS WITH FINGER LAKES WINERIES**

Our next meeting in this series will be held on Thursday July 25 at Fox Run Winery on Seneca Lake. Fox Run is owned by Scott Osborn, who since purchasing this winery has rapidly increased production and sales. Scott has been vocal about expressing the need for new plantings of Finger Lakes premium wine grapes. Although the focus at Fox Run has been *vinifera*, they are also interested in using some of the better hybrid varieties for their blends. This meeting will also provide an opportunity to see the progressive vineyard management approach that Fox Run is using to improve quality. Training and canopy management of premium varieties will be discussed as part of this meeting. A tasting of Fox Run wines will also be included.

An extra segment on disease and insect damage identification in the field will also be part of this meeting. Please bring samples from your vineyard for identification. We will also be bringing examples to show the group. Pesticide applicator recertification credits will be given.

This is the second meeting of this type, which we began last month at Anthony Road. The response of those who attended last month's meeting was very enthusiastic. Growers were able to hear about strategies for grape and wine pricing and how they relate to each other, how various types of wines do (sell) in the various markets, what varieties of grapes will be the basis of the future, what practices Anthony Road wants their growers to use, etc. These meetings provide a unique opportunity to get an in-depth look at what issues the winery faces. Growers who attend also are able to interact personally with the winery, which can lead to marketing opportunities.

The meeting is free to all growers enrolled in the Finger Lakes Grape Program. **Please call Katie at (315) 536-5134 on Monday - Friday between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm if you plan to attend.** Registration is limited to 40 people.

In August, we will be meeting at Swedish Hill Winery in Romulus.



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