

## GRAPE BREEDERS GATHER IN GENEVA

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by Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: Grape breeders are a devoted and hardy bunch. Over 40 of them braved Hurricane Floyd to cluster at the North American Grape Breeders Conference, September 16 and 17, in Geneva, NY.

"It was one of the best attended meetings of this group ever," said organizer Bruce Reisch, Cornell University professor of grape breeding and genetics at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva.

The group meets every two years in either the United States or Canada to discuss progress in grapevine breeding and related projects in genetics and taxonomy. Participants came from as far away as Korea, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, and Israel, as well as New York, California, Florida, Minnesota, Virginia, and Louisiana.

"Participants were treated to a dozen different oral presentations on studies such as disease resistance in grapes, new grape varieties, ecology of beneficial mites, grape growing in Europe, grape taxonomy, enology, the USDA grape germplasm collections, and insights discovered by private grape growers and researchers. In short, we discussed the whole gamut of grape activities taking place in both the U.S. and in five foreign countries," said Warren Lamboy, director of the USDA-ARS Plant Genetics Resources Unit.

Participants reported much progress in breeding for cold hardy, disease resistant hybrid varieties of both wine and table grapes. New varieties from California were presented along with other potential varieties from New York and Ontario. Others reported on crosses between muscadine grapes and bunch grapes and some unexpected successes in this hard-to-make cross between 40 and 38 chromosome species.

Participants from New New York, California and Germany presented progress reports on the



Suggested caption: Grape breeders gathered in Geneva to talk genetics, viticulture, and enology. CREDIT: J. Ogrodnick/NYSAES/Cornell

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development of transgenic grapevines and genomic maps of grapevines.

"There was a great deal of discussion about international acceptance of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)," said Reisch. Nomenclature of transgenic grapevines is currently on the agenda for European organizations and could implicate the development of improved forms of elite grapevine cultivars. Grape curators also addressed grape importation and plant quarantine issues.

Probably the single most important aspect of the meeting was the opportunity to meet simultaneously with a large number of grape breeders and researchers from across North America who represented academia as well as industry and private breeding facilities.

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