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1-1-2006

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Rhoda Burrows

South Dakota State University, Rhoda.Burrows@SDSTATE.EDU

Anne Fennell

South Dakota State University, anne.fennell@sdstate.edu

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Recommended Citation

Burrows, Rhoda and Fennell, Anne, "Grapes for South Dakota" (2006). *SDSU Extension Extra Archives*. 235.
https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_extra/235

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Grapes for South Dakota

Rhoda Burrows, associate professor and Extension horticulture specialist
Anne Fennell, professor, Horticulture, Forestry, Landscape and Parks Department

Before choosing a grape cultivar, note the following points:

- Determine how the grapes will be used, as different cultivars are recommended for juice, jam/jelly, or wine.
- Select early-maturing grape cultivars that have good cold hardiness if you are a beginning producer.
- Winter temperatures and other environmental factors in South Dakota limit grape production to hardy hybrid cultivars. The southern half of the state with its longer growing season and less damaging winter temperatures is more suited for grape production.
- Start with a small planting and observe the cultivar's characteristics and its interaction with the particular site before planting on a large scale.
- Except for the cultivar "St. Pepin," all the listed cultivars are self-fruitful.
- Purchase vines and cuttings from licensed nurseries to avoid importing insect and disease problems into South Dakota.
- Several of the cultivars listed are patented. If you purchase vines or cuttings from a licensed nursery the royalties have already been paid. If you are propagating your own materials, you are responsible for paying the fees; contact your horticulture Extension educator or the SDSU horticulture department for further information on royalties.
- If you plan to sell the grapes to a winery, it is highly recommended that you contact the winery or wineries prior to planting, as desired cultivars change over time.

Red Wine Grapes

Baltica (also known as Hasansky Sladky and Varajane Sinine). Blue-skinned berry, low tannin, moderate acidity. Makes light, fruity wine with cherry aroma and brilliant red coloring, using whole-cluster fermentation.

Frontenac. Hardy. Excellent wine grape for this region, ripens mid- to late September. Has cherry flavors, and sugar develops early; you need to wait for acidity to come down before picking. Needs cane pruning and cluster thinning to keep vine from overproducing. Good disease resistance and some tolerance to 2,4-D herbicide; susceptible to phylloxera. Minnesota patented cultivar.

Marechal Foch. French-American hybrid. Needs winter protection. Ripens early, has small clusters and berries, leave longer canes for optimal production. Produces a burgundy style wine or a true rose if handled properly. The early budbreak may lead to spring frost damage.

(Red Wine Grapes,continued)

Marquette. An excellent new red wine grape with high sugar and moderate acidity. Open, orderly growth habit. Very good resistance to downy mildew, powdery mildew, and black rot; moderate resistance to phylloxera. Tends to break bud early. Wine is ruby color with pronounced tannins and notes of cherry, berry, black pepper, and spice. Released in 2006 by the University of Minnesota.

St. Croix. Vines hardy to about minus 28° F, but roots are susceptible to damage in open winters. Matures mid-September, low acid, needs cluster thinning to keep good sugar levels, prune to short canes.

Valiant. see “Table, Juice, and Jelly Grapes”

White Wine Grapes

Brianna. White wine grape developed by Elmer Swenson. Berries are greenish gold to gold when fully ripe in early to mid-September. Wine is balanced with pineapple nose and flavor. Also makes a flavorful white juice. Should be winter hardy in southern South Dakota; trial in central to northern South Dakota.

Edelweiss. Edelweiss was introduced by Elmer Swenson and the University of Minnesota when Mr. Swenson was on the staff at the U of M Horticultural Research Center. This very early ripening white grape produces large clusters and is primarily for table, juice, and jelly uses. When the fruit is harvested early, it can also make a sweet white wine with mild, fruity labrusca flavor. The vines have excellent disease resistance but may require winter protection for reliable fruiting, and the early budbreak may lead to spring frost damage.

Frontenac Gris. A white sport of Frontenac, with a growth habit similar to Frontenac. Gray/light red fruit. A mid-season variety harvested in late September. Minnesota patented cultivar.

Kay Gray. Hardy. Vigorous white grape. Cane prune, harvest grapes before full maturity (15-18 brix). The must is susceptible to oxidation; avoid exposing juice, must, and wine to air.

La Crosse. Less hardy; winter protection is needed in most South Dakota locations. White wine grape with Seyval Blanc parentage. Good varietal or for blending with lighter wines.

LaCrescent. Hardy white wine grape released by the University of Minnesota in 2002. Ripens early (to golden-brown color), but acidity remains high and may need to be reduced during winemaking. Moderately susceptible to powdery and downy mildew. Loose clusters with occasional fruit set problems. May be susceptible to spring frost in areas that warm up early. Wine has apricot-like flavor and is excellent for blending. Minnesota patented cultivar.

Louise Swenson. Hardy white wine grape. Low sugar but moderate acidity. Breaks bud relatively late in spring. Mildew resistant.

Prairie Star. Hardy white wine grape. Moderately resistant to powdery and downy mildew. Good varietal or for blending with lighter white wines.

Seyval Blanc (SV 5-276 French-American hybrid). Needs winter protection. Produces quality dry white wine. Ripens mid-September. Vigorous; you need to prune to short canes or spurs and cluster thin.

St. Pepin. Needs winter protection in most South Dakota locations. White, early ripening, makes German style wine. Also good juice or table grape. (Female cultivar, requires pollen from another variety).

Swenson White. Hardy white wine grape. Ripens late in the season. It can have a slightly labrusca flavor and tends toward lower sugar. Could do well for late harvest or ice wine.

Table, Juice, and Jelly Grapes

Beta. Hardy. Blue. Flavorful jelly, acceptable juice.

Bluebell. Hardy. Blue juice or fresh table grape, large berries, ripens mid-September. Will have iron chlorosis problems at pH levels greater than 7.5.

Brianna. See above under white wine grapes.

Edelweiss. See above under white wine grapes.

Elvira. Moderately hardy. White juice or wine grape. Has foxy flavor and is acidic.

King of the North. Late ripening Concord style grape that originated in Wisconsin.

Swenson Red. May need winter protection. Red table grape, large berries, seeded, thin edible skin, fruit keeps well in refrigerator.

Valiant. Hardy. Blue. Good juice, jelly, or table grape. May also be used for wine. Cane training systems recommended. This grape has a tendency to overbear; you may need to cluster thin. Cultivar licensed with the South Dakota Landscape and Nursery Association.

Worden. Hardy. Blue table and juice grape. Early ripening Concord seedling.