



UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln | EXTENSION

**University of Nebraska Viticulture Program**

Editors: Dr. Paul Read, Professor of Horticulture & Viticulture and  
Stephen J. Gamet, Department of Agronomy & Horticulture

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## 2022 VINTAGE A SUCCESS (MOSTLY 😊)

It certainly was a challenging vintage with lots of variability across the state. Growers encountered hail, late frost in some areas, serious herbicide drift, and sporadic damaging weather events, to name a few of the challenges. However, as Max McFarland said, in spite of challenges, “the wines should be great from the grapes that we were able to harvest”. Our University of Nebraska Viticulture Program (UNVP) experienced our share of difficulties and challenges starting on December 15, 2021, when a freak tornado-like wind storm hit our vinifera high tunnel, causing serious damage to the structure. Because the damage was so severe and it was so late in the season (early winter), we were unable to repair the high tunnel until mid to late 2022. To ensure that the vinifera vines would survive without the anticipated protection by the high tunnel, we mounded soil around each plant to a depth of about 18 inches, thus covering and protecting the graft unions. Fast forward to fall 2022 and the repairs to the high tunnel were completed following the 2022 growing season (Yeoman’s work by Steve Gamet, Thanks, Steve!). The vinifera vines survived the winter with virtually no damage, grew well during the growing season, and now have hardened off nicely, so we are looking forward to a potential harvest in 2023, the first test of our vinifera in high tunnels project. We will provide updates on this and other projects in the spring and during the growing season.

The UNVP also experienced other challenges, not the least of which was an almost complete wipe-out of Itasca vines that were in the third year of our crop reduction study. This probable herbicide drift (dicamba?) meant that we could not follow up on the first two years of research on these specific Itasca vines. We did initiate a new test on Cynthiana/Norton vines at Rich Harvest vineyards, which partially made up for the loss of the Itasca part of the project. Thanks go to Mick McDowell for allowing the UNVP to pursue this project for the first two years of the study and appreciation is expressed to Rich Halama for providing the Cynthiana vines for our 2022 research. We were able to continue our High Tunnel Table Grape project, pursue cultivar evaluations, along with vineyard management studies throughout the 2022 growing season. There will be more to share about these and other projects as we continue them in 2023. Watch future Nebraska VineLines issues and the UNVP web site for details and for soon to be announced field days and/or tailgates to be held during the 2023 growing season.

**We at the University of Nebraska Viticulture Program all wish you, your families and colleagues a most Healthy, Happy and Enjoyable Holiday Season. Celebrate by enjoying Nebraska wines!**

## HIGHLIGHTS OF VITINORD 2022 IN VERMONT

The 2022 celebration of cold climate grapes and wines took place in Burlington, Vermont from December 4-7, 2022, bringing together grape and wine people who pursue growing and vinifying cold climate grapes. Attendees came from most northern USA states (e.g. Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, the Dakotas and New England), along with Canadian provinces, Sweden, Denmark and other northern European locations. Our own Max McFarland emceed much of the technical program, with the first keynote address being presented by Jim Trezise, Executive Director of WineAmerica. His title “Cold is Cool and Small is Big” set the tone for the conference. Jim drew liberally from the recent WineAmerica study that illustrated the huge impact of the wine industry nationally, but also noted that the 12 states in the Northern Grapes Project contributed 12% (\$20 billion) to that impact. (Nebraska was a part of that project and its impact is pegged at \$1.28 billion.) Jim also focused on many of the cold climate grapes that we grow and pointed out that the best wines in a number of prestigious competitions came from northern states, including a rose’ from Nebraska! He also mentioned topics of concern are being followed carefully by WineAmerica, including the possibility of the United States Postal Service shipping of wine and the proposed nutritional labelling of wine. A second key presenter was Greg Jones, arguably the best known authority on the impact of climate on grapes and wine. His topic was “Climate Change and the Future of Viticulture in the Northeast. He provided background on how the geology, landscape, soil, individual weather events and climate variability affect wine styles and quality. He also mentioned that more temperature and precipitation records have been broken in the last 20 years than in the previous 40! The impressive amount of data related to weather, climate and grapes that he presented cannot be included in this discussion because of limited space and time, but one can follow up by accessing his web site: [www.climateofwine.com](http://www.climateofwine.com). A couple of interesting points made by Jones included that humidity is increasing, thus raising concerns for diseases and

their control. He also pointed out a bit of trivia: in spite of 1368 cultivars (varieties) being listed in the book by Jancis Robinson, et al, only 16 cultivars are responsible for over 50% of wine produced worldwide.

Sustainability was an important topic for several of the speakers with Lisa Francioni suggesting that sustainability consists of three important parts: they should be Environmentally Sound, Economically Feasible and Socially Equitable. Included in these areas of focus should be building healthy soils, protecting and conserving water and air quality, energy efficiency and assuring a productive and healthy workforce. She showed photos of sheep in the vineyard, which reminded me of a speaker from a Missouri vineyard that we featured at a University of Nebraska conference about 10 years ago! Jim Ballard, James Arthur Vineyards presented “The Wine Industry: Leading the way for Sustainable Specialty Crops in Nebraska”, continuing the sustainability theme, aiming for meeting the needs of the future without compromising the environment. “Natural Wines: The Vermont Perspective” presented by Kendra Knapik from Ellison Estates winery in Vermont, also continued this thread (it was interesting to visit Ellison Estates as part of the conference field trip, cold and wet, but at least not snowing!) Imed Dami, , the Ohio State University, presented an overview of the physiology of bud break and results of the OSU research on delaying bud break. The use of Protone (20% abscisic acid, or ABA) applied at a rate of 400 to 600 ppm at veraison to post veraison resulted in earlier foliage drop in the fall, but delayed bud break the next spring with little to no effect on yield and harvest parameters.

Elaine Chukan Brown, known as a “Global Wine Educator”, presented “What does it Take to Create a Unique Identity of a Wine Region?” Her presentation held the attention of the audience, even though she did not use visuals in her presentation, a very effective speaker. She used the evolution of the Central Otago (in New Zealand’s southern island) wine region as an example of a region that needed to establish an identity. Even though they could grow great Gewurztraminer, it wasn’t until growers

demonstrated success with Pinot Noir that they established an identity. Now, (If you can find them) bottles of Pinot Noir from central Otago command a premium on the market. She made the point that it isn't necessary to focus on a specific cultivar (but it's okay to have a "champion"), but more importantly need to focus on a special identity.

Many more speakers' topics were insightful and of value to those in attendance, but I'll save discussion of those and lessons from the Field Trip for a future issue of the Nebraska Vinellnes.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

## Some Questions for 2023

Following are some topics to be thinking about as we head into the 2023 vintage year:

- What is the impact of climate change on vineyard production?
- Is there new technology that can be integrated into your enterprise?
- How consistent is yield from year to year (how can it be improved)?
- What cultivars are in your future?
- Is disease/insect management a concern for the coming growing season?
- How serious are grapevine trunk diseases in your vineyard (what measures are being contemplated to deal with GTD?)
- Are vineyard floor management and weed management topics of concern?
- What measures can be considered to improve fruit ripening and quality?

## Items for your Calendar:

January 13&14 - Great Plains Conference, St. Joseph , Missouri

February 3&4 – Nebraska Local Foods Conference

February 20&21 – Ohio Grape and Wine Conference

February 22&23 – Iowa Specialty Crops Conference

March 14-16 – Eastern Winery Exposition & Conference, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

March 28-30 - BEV-NY (Business, Enology and Viticulture)

May 12&13 - TOAST Nebraska - Stinson Park, Omaha, NE

June 7-9 – American Society for Enology and Viticulture, Eastern Section – Austin, Texas

June 26-29 – American Society for Enology and Viticulture Annual Conference, Napa, California

May 17-18, 2024, TOAST Nebraska, Stinson Park, Omaha, NE



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