



# Nebraska VineLines

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## **HARVEST AND SEASON SUMMARY**

Vintage 2021 has been challenging, with many ups and downs. However, on balance, it has been a good year for many Nebraska growers and wineries. Reports of crop reduction or loss caused by herbicide drift, hail and birds have been frequent, but balanced by excellent crops, especially with many of the white wine grapes such as Edelweiss, La Crescent, Frontenac Gris and Itasca. Many feared that the extreme cold temperatures experienced in February would have resulted in trunk, cordon, and bud damage, but this fear was mostly unrealized, probably because of the gradual hardening that occurred in the preceding autumn months.

In some locations herbicide drift was prevalent, but in many cases the vines rebounded well with vigorous new growth and adequate fruit set. This problem seems to be an ongoing continual problem but depending upon timing can create serious problems or be just an annoyance. During harvest bird depredations have been reported to be a problem, especially tiny vireos that can get through small holes or gaps in netting and flickers whose beaks are long enough to damage berries through the netting. Hail damage has ranged from serious to minor, again depending upon the timing, size of hail and duration.

As always, fruit set was variable, again depending upon weather, timing of wind and extreme temperature events, among others. Despite this variability, good yields have been reported with upwards of 20 to more than 30 pounds per plant with some cultivars. With these optimistic reports, it is apparent that Nebraska's 2021 vintage will provide lots of tasty wines for our

drinking pleasure! I look forward to trying some in 2022!

## **TIPS AND TENDRILS: A FEW POST HARVEST SUGGESTIONS**

Now that the "hay is in the barn", that is, your grapes are harvested, you can sit back and relax, right? Wrong! To assure that next year's vines are healthy and prepared for a potential 2022 vintage, there are several steps that should be taken.

- Disease Management. Check for evidence of downy mildew and powdery mildew and if present apply a post-harvest spray (see the Midwest Small Fruit and Grape Spray Guide).
- Vineyard Hygiene. Remove all prunings, dead leaves and mummies (dried berries that have remained on the vine or in the vineyard) and destroy them. They can serve as repositories for overwintering disease spores and lead to early spring infections.
- Fertilizer. No fertilizer applications are necessary unless deficiency symptoms are evident or if soil test results indicate that fertility levels are low. Especially say NO to N. Nitrogen applications are not usually taken up by grapevine roots in the fall and because it is soluble, most nitrogen applied in the fall will leach out of the soil and perhaps stimulate late season growth that will be vulnerable to cold temperatures. It also may wind up in the ground water and streams, thus contributing to pollution.
- Weeds. Fall can be a good time to treat weed problems, especially perennial weeds such as Canada thistle and woody invasives. It also can

be an easy time to control winter annuals (biennials) such as shepherd's purse, penny cress and others.

- Trellis repairs. Fall is a good time to assess any damage to the trellis system ( broken posts, wires, lost clips, staples, etc.)
- Order planting stock for those replacement plants or additions to the vineyard. Nurseries sometimes run out of popular and newer cultivars, so getting your order in early may be beneficial.
- Equipment cleaning, repairs or ordering replacements. Fall is a good time to take care of these chores.

### **NWGGA FOUNDER AND PAST PRESIDENT DIES AT 87**

James Arthur Jeffers, who established what is now Nebraska's largest and oldest continuously operating winery in Raymond, Nebraska passed away on Tuesday, September 14, 2021. The winery was opened officially in September of 1997, making it the second post-Prohibition winery to open in Nebraska. Jim used his first and middle names to identify the winery, while initiating and expanding plantings in the mid-1990s. He also purchased Rock Bluff Vineyard, a producing vineyard which had been established by Jim Danielson near Plattsmouth; this gave James Arthur Vineyards (JAV) the opportunity to begin production soon after planting several acres on his property near Raymond, Nebraska. Jim also helped jump-start the overall Nebraska industry by inviting local land-owners to plant grapevines, whose production would ultimately be sold to JAV, another move that enabled JAV to have significant production in the early years after

establishment of the winery. In that time-frame, Jim also led the legal processes required to establish the Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association (NWGGA) that now includes most of the more than 30 wineries and over 100 growers in Nebraska. This accomplishment is another example of Jim's foresight, which led to Nebraska's grape and wine industry getting started on a solid footing.

Jim was always planning ahead, as evidenced by his previous success in the meat industry. He hired a University of California-Davis graduate named Tim Moore to take advantage of Moore's education and expertise that facilitated the early development of the JAV vineyard and winery. Ultimately, son-in-law Jim Ballard became the full-time winemaker, a position that he holds to this day (Ballard and wife Barb co-own and manage JAV today). James Arthur Vineyards wines have won top awards in prestigious international and national competitions, including the Monterey California Competition, Florida International and other competitions. In appreciation of Jim Jeffers' contributions to the Nebraska grape and wine industry, he was honored with the NWGGA's highest accolade, the Nebraska Wine and Grape Industry Pioneer Award. Jim's leadership and contributions to the Nebraska grape and wine industry will be sorely missed, but his legacy lives on, not only in the James Arthur Vineyard and Winery, but also in the many success stories engendered by grape grower and winery enterprises that will carry on the reputation of Nebraska's wine excellence inspired by Jim Jeffers.



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