

Wine

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far as the wine industry is concerned, labrusca varieties are very hardy plants.

Vinefera are the very best wine grapes, but they are extremely difficult to grow. Miller feels certain that American viticulturists will eventually master the art of growing these tender-skinned French grapes, but he didn't feel he should start out with vinefera. The hybrids he picked combine labrusca hardiness with a good measure of vinefera quality.

Could a Lancaster County or Pennsylvania wine industry ever compete with giants like California's Gallo Brothers? "Not on the basis of price and quantity," Miller said. "I think the key to our success here will be the quality of the product. If we start with French hybrids, we'll be a cut above the cheaper wines. I'd like to see a vin ordinaire - ordinary wine - in Lancaster County. In France, as you go from region to region you can order the vin ordinaire and each has its own special qualities."

While Miller thinks growers here should start with French hybrids, he feels the real rewards will come to those who are successful with vinefera.

How does the wine market look in the years ahead? "There's no way in the world that grape production can keep up with the booming demand for wine," Miller said. "Young people, today are rejecting liquor, and they're turning to wine, instead. They start with the cheaper, pop wines, and as they become more discriminating they go on to better wines. I think there's where Lancaster County can become important - in producing the finer wines."

Many of Lancaster County's farmers won't drink wine or any other alcoholic beverage because of their conservative backgrounds. Could this attitude slow the development of Lancaster County vineyards? "A lot of them won't use tobacco, either, but they sure do grow it," Miller said. "You shouldn't think of wine as booze, anyway. It's food. You drink wine with a meal because, it enhances the flavor of food. Liquor kills it."

"Besides," Miller added, "a farmer can earn a lot

more from grapes than he can with tobacco. An acre of grapes can gross from \$1500 to \$2000 a year. Tobacco will return \$300. And I don't think there's really that much difference in the amount of work."

First year expenses for a vineyard can be high, from \$1500 to \$2500 an acre for vines and wire trellises. And a beginning grower must wait three years for his first harvest. But once a vineyard is established, maintenance should be very cheap, according to Miller. Spraying and tractor fuel are virtually the only maintenance costs.

The heaviest labor requirement in grape growing comes, of course, during harvest which is mid-to late October. During the cold months vines must be pruned and tied up to the wire trellises, and there is some spraying and cultivating in the summer. Miller feels he can easily handle his ten acres, and reported that it's not at all unusual to find 50-acre vineyards in New York where all labor is supplied by the family.

Not every farm, even in Lancaster County, is suitable for vineyards,

Miller pointed out. He said site selection is the most important step in getting started, and feels that expert help is a vital necessity. One good source of help is the county extension office, which is where Miller started. Soil type, air drainage, and the frost-free period are the most critical considerations in selecting a site. Usually, if a site is suited for orchards, it's suited for vineyards.

One thing Miller thinks favors a wine industry in County, two in Bucks County with two more in the planning stages, and Lancaster County's own Pequea Valley Winery. All these and any other state winners will be required to use Pennsylvania grapes, and a lot of them. H. Peterman Wood, for example, owner of the Pequea Valley Winery, expects his eventual requirements to exceed 200 acres.

"There's a great future here in the wine grape industry," Miller said, "but Pennsylvania is the fact that the Limited Wineries Act requires state wineries to use only grapes grown in the Commonwealth. There are several wineries in Erie

it'll take a lot of work. One thing I think we need is more farmer input into research, and we need to get more Penn State people interested in wine grapes."

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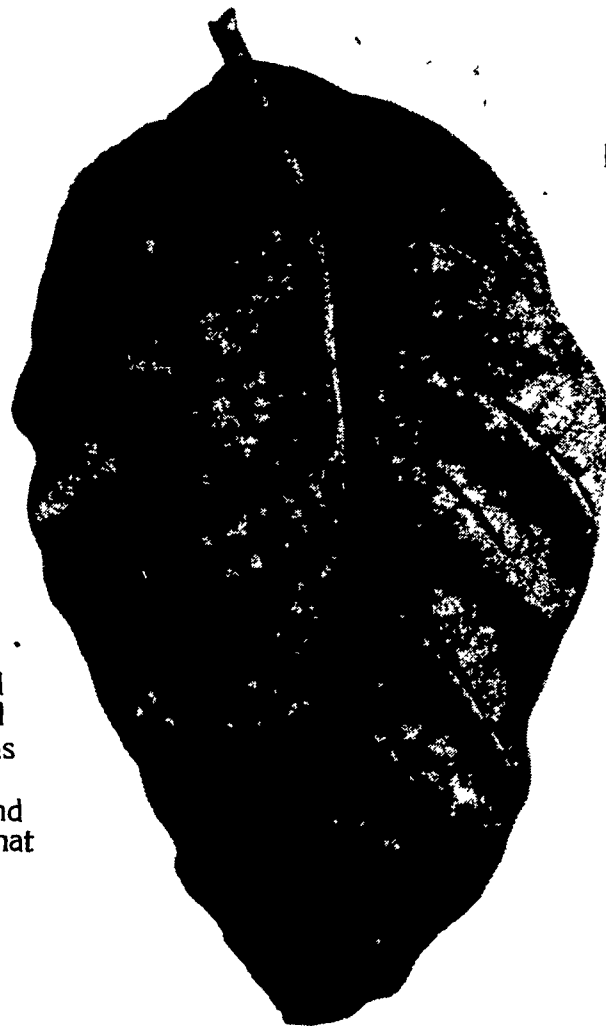
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