Top Ten List: Things Prospective Grape Growers Should Know

Chris Carroll Crossing Vineyards And Winery

WASHINGTON CROSS-ING (Bucks Co.) — We did three years of planning and research before planting our first vines at Crossing Vineyards and Winery in Washington Crossing, Pennsylva-

We attended workshops, visited other vinevards, extensively tested and amended our soil, and enlisted the help of

experts. Still, like many new vineyard owners, we were forced to make critical decisions without sufficient knowledge. If only we'd known then what we know now.

• Number Ten: **Choose Your** Site Carefully

Elevation is the single most important consideration in choosing a site for your vineyard. 1500-1800 feet above sea level is the upper limit for growing grapes. An elevation of 820-1500 feet is considered most de-

Drainage is also important. Grapes don't like waterlogged soil.

A southeast facing slope is best; 3-10 percent is preferable. Sloping ground helps to accelerate the dispersion of water and cold air.

• Number Nine: To Vinifera Or Not To Vinifera

Your chance of success will improve if you plant the more cold-hardy vinifera varieties which have been grafted onto hardy, pest-tolerant root stocks.

If frequent, sustained temperatures below minus 5 degrees Farenheit occur more than once in ten years on your site, growing vinifera may not be realistic.

• Number Eight: To Grow Tube Or Not To Grow Tube

Many grape growers swear by the grow tube, a protective sheath that covers the young vine during the first season to protect it from disease and pests.

Some disadvantages of the grow tube: promotes the growth of only one shoot; hardening off of the vine can be more difficult; can actually promote certain fungal diseases.

Again, making the proper choice depends completely on your site.

• Number Seven: **Metal Or Wood Posts**

If we could do it over, we Double Curtain. would use metal posts. They last forever, and the catch wires can be moved much more easily. Unless the aesthetics offend, we recommend metal posts and plan to use them in future plantings.

• Number Six:

Trellising Systems

Experts currently favor the divided canopy method. Some of the more popular training systems including Scott Henry, Smart-Dyson, Geneva

After much research, we decided to use the VSP (Vertical Shoot Positioning) method. Since we now know that we have a high vigor site, we are considering Scott Henry for future plantings, which will be largely vinifera.

• Number Five: Vine Spacing

This decision is a critical one. It affects how many vines can be planted on your site and how the grapes will eventually be harvested. If you decide to plant closer together to maximize the use of your ground, you might not be able to harvest mechanically.

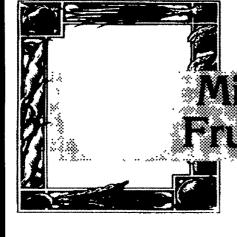
We used an 8 x 5 spacing plan: 8 feet between rows, 5 feet between plants. An ideal row length is 600 feet.

However you choose to lay out your plants, be sure to allow 25-30 feet of usable turnaround space for your tractor at the end of the rows.

> • Number Four: Size Of **Initial Planting**

So much can be learned about your site from the first planting. A good idea would be to limit it to two acres, an acre each of two different va-

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Sweet Corn Varieties

- What is Sweet Corn Worth Am I Selling It for the Right Price - Gary Sweet, Cleveland, OH

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No-Till/Strip-Till Sweet Corn Onion, Garlic and Leeks Beans

- Use of Gaucho

Weed Management

- Bean Viruses

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-Producing Herbs in the Greenhouse

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-Media and Nutrient Additions for Transplants-Dr John Biernbaum, Michigan State -Organic Production of Medicinal Herbs- Dr Jeanine Davis, North Carolina State Univ

-Making and Using High Quality Compost

Seedless Watermelon Production - Dr Jonathan Schultheis, North Carolina State Univ

Spacing and Fertigation in Winter Squashes - Varieties of Summer Squash and Melons Tomato, Pepper and Eggplant

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For vegetable, potato & flower program registration fees information, contact Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association - 717-694-3596 www pvga org