

Newsletter

May, 2003

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| Next Meeting: | Thursday May 15, 2003 at 7:30 PM. Maplewood Community Center |
| Secretary: | Phil Tochtrop, 1546 Virginia Ave., Ellisville, MO 63011 (636) 391-6937 Katherine_14846@msn.com |

HAPPENING THIS MONTH

Bob Mueller from Roebler Winery will be speaking to our group this month. The subject will be, "Making White Wine". Roebler Winery is located in Washington MO. They are gold medal winners with their Traminet wine at the San Diego National Wine Contest. They are the first winery producing Traminet wine in Missouri.

SECRETARY'S CORNER

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| <p><i>Reminder #1:</i> \$3 per person in attendance is due to Alice Rau, Treasurer, upon arrival at each meeting to help cover the cost of cheese and bread for the evening's tasting. First-time guests do not pay.</p> |
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Growing Blackberries

By Kathy Tochtrop

Blackberries are arguably one of the easiest fruits to grow in Missouri. They are native to the area and are not fussy about their soil preferences. They require little space and can tolerate a moderate amount of shade and still produce large crops. In fact, my most productive canes are in shade from noon on.

The first choice in planting blackberries is to choose between thorny and thornless berries. My preference, hands down, is thornless. I remember my grandmother, who I loved dearly, dressing me in a long shirt and pants on a 90-degree plus day, dousing me with sulphur and sending me into battle. Granted, the blackberry harvest was worth it but today you can enjoy the fruit without the grief. There are many thornless cultivars to pick from, so I no longer feel that flavor is an issue.

I would recommend picking 2 to 3 cultivars if you are beginning a blackberry patch. Even though they are native to the area, some varieties have been developed elsewhere and do not do well here. In my own experience, I started with 3 varieties. I will name them #1, #2, and #3. The #1 blackberry produced fairly well from the beginning and spread on its own. The flavor was somewhat tart if I compared it to the wild variety. Blackberry #2 promptly died. Blackberry #3 grew but did not prosper or spread very well. It was sweet but the fruit usually dried in our hot summers before it ripened. The wine we produce now comes from blackberry #1. I tried a new one last year and so far it is growing well. It will take another year to taste the fruit.

This brings me to the fruiting cycle of blackberries. They fruit on second year canes. The first year they sprout up along side the mother cane and grow to various lengths. The next year those canes will flower and produce fruit. Along with these, the new canes for the

following year's fruit will appear and so on... After the canes have produced fruit they will die. You need to remove these from your patch as they can harbor disease. I usually wait till the fall and prune these canes out. Here's how to identify the canes that need to be removed. Look for stems that have been left behind as you picked the fruit and cut that cane back to the ground. Remove and discard the old canes.

For years I always had a moderate crop of blackberries, but not a bountiful crop. I fertilized with 10-10-10 several times through the growing season. One day I was in a nursery in Union, MO. They had a picture posted of lush canes with a bumper crop of berries growing on them. Of course I asked how this was accomplished. The nurserywoman told me that blackberries like a lot of fertilizer and a lot of water. After that I changed my feeding program. I now feed with grass fertilizer (high nitrogen) more often. Begin fertilizing when the daffodils are about 4" high. Continue feeding every 3 to 4 weeks till late fall. Spread the fertilizer at the same rate you would on your lawn. Even though the fruit is harvested in July, the plant needs to produce next years crop.

I also pay more attention to watering my plants. They usually need no extra water in the spring and early summer. By the middle or end of June, you may need to institute regular watering. Keep the ground slightly moist. It is important for them to have enough moisture, particularly up to harvest. After harvest, you can let them dry out a little more, but never let them suffer drought. Since I changed my fertilizing and watering methods, my crop of berries has grown significantly. Last year my patch produced over 50 lbs. of berries. My patch is just along the back of our fence, about 80 feet, and one plant deep.

Diseases are not a major problem with blackberries. You do need to watch for fungus and the ordinary bugs. Begin spraying after blossom drop. I combine either Sevin or Malathion with a fungicide and spray every 3 to

4 weeks. I also vary the fungicide. Both products may be combined into one spraying.

When it comes time to harvest, blackberries must be given a "gentle hand". They are delicate and very perishable. Look for berries that are all black, if they have any red on them they will be tart. Empty your bucket often or else you'll crush the berries on the bottom. I rinse, drain, and refrigerate mine immediately. They are best stored in an airtight container such as "Tupperware" or "Rubbermaid". Even then, their storage life is about a week. Some berries we begin to make wine with immediately, the others I package in 1# containers and freeze for later ferments. We've tried using 3# to 5# per gallon in our wine. They're high in acid so you need to adjust that accordingly. Our personal favorite is 5# per gallon mix with no acid added. The flavor seems to be a little milder.

If you've now decided to invite blackberries into your garden, here are some planting tips. I usually space them farther apart than recommended by the nursery, up to ten feet apart. I do this so that I can propagate more plants with little effort. Blackberries will readily root if "continued to be attached" to the "Mother" plant. Take a long cane, bring the outmost 12 inches down to the ground, and dig a small trench. Working with this 12inch section, place the first 5 to 6 inches of the cane into the trench leaving the end 5 to 6 inches out of the ground. Cover the cane in the trench with about 3 inches of soil. You can use rooting hormone if you want but I haven't found it to make much difference with blackberries. They will form a new plant in several months. Ultimate spacing of the plants can be 1 to 2 feet apart.

Blackberries are not readily available at our local nurseries. I've put a listing of some sources in "This And That".

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

OLD BUSINESS

- ? Minutes were approved as reported in last month's newsletter.
- ? The Treasurer reported that the MWS treasury is solvent.
- ? Thanks to Paul and Keith for sharing their award winning receipts with us.

NEW BUSINESS

- ? Bernard Cleve attended a vertical tasting of Norton wine that was held at Stone Hill Winery. It included tastings of Norton for 10 years. He noted that Nortons that were more than 4 years old were changed in color, aroma, and taste. The event has been held for 15 years.
- ? Keith Burns brought in 2 carafes that were presented to Paul Hendricks. One was for "top score, non-grape" and the other for "best of show". Another carafe for "top score-grape" will be mailed to Linda Kaiser, a contestant in New York.
- ? Charlie Franke brought in an antique cork puller and an antique corker .The cork puller was patented 1860-61 and originally used to pull beer corks. The corker was possibly made about the same time. Both items are similar to items that can be found today in a catalog entitled "Wine Enthusiast". It can be found at www.wineenthusiast.com . Dave Anderson volunteered to bring the "gadget of the month" for May.
- ? We welcome several new members to our club: James & Roberta Traver and Penn & Betty Vaughn.
James Traver is from Willow Springs, MO. He has been making wines from the Brewking line of kits. He is interested in contacting any of the club members who have fermented kits on the low side of volume to keep the alcohol and character up for increased life of the wine. You can contact him at traverj12@hotmail.com. Penn and Betty Vaughn live in Wildwood.

We hope you enjoy expanding your knowledge of wine making through the club.

MARCH PROGRAM

Our guest speaker for the April meeting was Denny Franklin. He is the chief wine maker at Pleasant Hollow Winery in Benton IL. Denny began his career in wine making as an amateur and was a former member of our club. The winery is noted for its Black And Blue Wine. The name stands for a combination of blackberries and blueberries. In addition, the winery's Norton won best in that category at the Indiana State Fair for 2002.

The Black And Blue wine accounts for 50% of the winery's total sales. They make 4000 gallons per year. The Marion blackberry is used in their wine. They use 10 lbs. of blueberries and 8 lbs. of blackberries to the gallon. Both wines are fermented separately and blended when complete.

In making the blueberry wine fermentation is started at 50 to 55 degrees, with the ferment continued at 60 degrees. The yeast used is EC1118. Super food from Wine Lab is also added. The blueberries are fermented on the skins for 6 days and then pressed. The levels are adjusted to produce 10.5% alcohol. They keep the acid at .83 with a pH of 3.35

The blackberries are begun fermenting at a higher temperature and are not pressed. The skins are skimmed off.

When the wines are finished, they are blended at the rate of 60% blueberry and 40% blackberry. After blending, a bentonite fining is done.

WINE TASTING

Our April program consisted of tastings from Pleasant Hollow Winery. Below is a listing of some of the wines tasted along with a description of the wine.

- ? Black And Blue – the wine is described in the above article.
- ? Peach – the Redhaven peach is used at 10 lb. per gallon. It is fermented on the skins for 6 days with the pits. Then it is drained, not pressed.
- ? Red Raspberry
- ? Fruit Finales – this can be peach, blueberry or cherry wine fortified with grape brandy. We tasted blueberry

THIS AND THAT

- ? Wine tools can be found at www.wineenthusiast.com
- ? Blackberries are carried by these nurseries:
Junge Nursery at www.jungseed.com or 1-800-247-5864
Gurney's Seed at www.gurneys.com or 1-513-354-1491
Henry Field's at www.henryfields.com or 1-513-354-1494
Indiana Berry & Plant at www.inberry.com or 1-800-295-2226
- ? Several interesting web sites are;
www.winemakermag.org and www.mtngrv.smsu.edu/grapenews.htm