

## Minnesota Hardy



### 'Itasca' Joins List of Released Cold-Hardy Wine Grapes

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April 11, 2016

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The University of Minnesota is releasing its fifth cold-hardy wine grape and it's named 'Itasca.'

The new grape, which will be used to make dry white wines, is the latest in a series of cold-hardy cultivars released by the university that led to the nascent wine industry in Minnesota and other northern climates around the world. Itasca has lower acidity and high sugar levels, says U of M grape breeder Matt Clark, coupled with



high resistance to common grape pests such as downy and powdery mildew and the insect phylloxera. It's shown cold hardiness as far north as the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Zone 4.

"We believe these traits will make 'Itasca' a preferred variety for vineyard managers, because they will be able to reduce their spray inputs, and for wine makers in making a dry-style wine," says Clark, an assistant professor of horticultural science. Licensed nurseries will begin selling the new cultivar in 2017.

Itasca produces a wine that is light yellow to straw in color and has aromas of pear, quince, violet, melon, minerals, and subtle honey notes.

"This is a very nice grape with lots of potential as a wine maker's grape," said Bryan Forbes, the university's wine maker. "It is clean and pleasant with pear and floral notes and mineral notes with a long finish."

Itasca joins the grapes known as Frontenac, Frontenac Gris, La Crescent and Marquette, all developed by the U of M. The cold-climate grape-growing and winery industry is estimated to have a \$401 million economic impact nationwide, a 2014 university study found. Since Frontenac was released in 1996, producers in 12 states have planted an estimated 5,400 acres of cold-hardy grapes, including 3,260 acres of the U of M varieties.

'Itasca' was identified in 2009 as an elite seedling and has been known as MN 1285 since 2009; Clark announced the new name at his annual research update for the Minnesota grape industry this weekend at the U's Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

## Did You Know?

Our grape breeding program encompasses over 10 acres of research vineyards with approximately 10,000 experimental vines. Seedlings are produced each year using a diverse genetic base that includes classic *Vitis vinifera* cultivars, quality French hybrids, and cold hardy, disease resistant selections based on *V. riparia*, Minnesota's native grape.

## Helpful Links

- [Ask a Master Gardener \(http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener/ask/\)](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener/ask/)
- [Buy Grape Vines \(http://mnhardy.umn.edu/buy/buy-grapes\)](http://mnhardy.umn.edu/buy/buy-grapes)
- [Growing Help for Home Gardeners \(http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/fruit/#grapes\)](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/fruit/#grapes)
- [U of M Enology Blog \(http://enology.umn.edu/\)](http://enology.umn.edu/)

- [Minnesota Grape Growers Association \(http://www.mngrapes.org/\)](http://www.mngrapes.org/) (MGGA)
- [Minnesota Farm Winery Association \(http://mnwine.org/\)](http://mnwine.org/)
- [Commercial Fruit Website \(http://fruit.cfans.umn.edu/grapes/\)](http://fruit.cfans.umn.edu/grapes/)

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