

CONNIE'S NOTES: WHERE TO BEGIN IF YOU'RE CONSIDERING MUSCADINE PRODUCTION

There is an abundance of muscadine production information on the web. Start with the Muscadine Grape Production Guide for North Carolina (<http://www.smallfruits.org/Muscadines/production/MuscadineGuide2003.pdf>).

The North Carolina Muscadine Grape Association is another great resource (<http://www.ncmuscadine.org>). They have two meetings each year that are a good place to network with other growers and potential buyers and hear more about research and recommendations that pertain to growing muscadines. Complete meeting details and registration forms can be found on their website.

I have two short articles on the Cooperative Extension site that may be of use (<http://duplin.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=news&ci=CROP+2> and <http://duplin.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=news&ci=CROP+1>).

And I also suggest that you contact your local Extension Agent (visit <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=countycenters> and click on your county, then choose "Staff" from the buttons on the top of the page and scroll down to those with Horticulture responsibilities.)

The price you receive will depend on your buyer; wineries in the SE usually pay around \$500 per ton and you can expect 5-8 tons per acre on mature muscadine wine varieties, such as Carlos and Noble.

The first step if you plan on growing muscadines to sell to a winery would be to visit local wineries and find out if they're interested in buying them. There are at least 60 wineries in NC, a third of which produce or sell muscadine wine that you can contact to see if they might be interested. Visit www.ncwine.com for a complete list with contact info. Unfortunately, most of the wineries are not looking for new growers at this time. If you do find someone that's interested they will tell you which cultivars to plant.

Selling fresh muscadines is another option that will bring in more income (\$2-3.50 per quart at a farm stand or farmers market, \$34 per 27 lb box to a wholesaler) but will require more management including extra labor for hand-harvesting.

Then you will want to order your plants in the summer, the year before you want to plant. You'll need 218 plants per acre for the single-wire trellis system. Choose a site with good water and air drainage and send a soil sample to NCDA for analysis. You'll apply lime and fertilizer based on the results of the soil test. Then install the trellis before you plant.

For assistance, contact Connie Fisk, Extension Associate for Muscadine Grapes by phone (910-296-2143) or email (connie_fisk@ncsu.edu), or an agent of the NC Cooperative Extension Service in your county.