

Illinois Viticulture Research Priorities Proposed to the Viticulture Consortium - East

The Illinois grape and wine industry was documented in 2007 to have approximately 1100 acres of grapes in commercial production and 850,000 gallons of winery capacity. Wine production in 2006 was approximately 550,000 gallons. This represents growth from a base of less than 100 acres and 2 wineries prior to 1990. The growth appears to be sustained as more licenses are being released and acreage being planted. This means that the industry is generally young and inexperienced, with some important exceptions.

Many of the viticultural problems grape growers experience in Illinois are due to the inexperience of new growers and do not require research. Rather, educational programming is sufficient to address those problems. However, there are other problems that are not the result of inexperience but are chronic and systemic to the industry and not sufficiently addressed in research literature, particularly for the Midwest and the unique varieties grown here. The research priorities presented here focus on those problems for Illinois viticulture.

The following research priorities are presented as a whole and are not ranked for preference. They were developed and reviewed by representatives of the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association, Southern Illinois University and the University of Illinois.

Illinois Viticulture Research Priorities for 2009

- Improved fruit quality and vineyard profitability through canopy management practices
- Suitability of rootstock cultivars for fruit quality and pest resistance in Midwest grape cultivars
- Addressing long-term vine decline : the role of virus and transmission sources and phylloxera
- Developing disease-free grape nursery stock and maintaining it in the vineyard
- Breeding improved hardy, disease-resistant red wine grape cultivars for the Midwest
- Managing the fungal grape disease complex with emphasis on downy mildew
- Developing reliable production systems for vinifera wine grapes in Illinois
- Improved management practices in new grape plantings to accelerate return on investment