

HOME & GARDEN TIPS

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Muscadine Season is Here Again

Muscadine ripening signals the start of a new season. Before the last muscadine is ripe, the frost will be on the pumpkin. Muscadine time has arrived.

These grapes, which herald the end of summer, are one of the great treats of life. No homestead in Georgia is complete without a muscadine arbor or trellis. There is an estimated of 2,000 acres of muscadines grown in backyard vineyards, and Georgia has 1,000 acres of commercial muscadine vineyards.

Scuppernong is one of the oldest muscadine's in cultivation. It was selected from the wild on the banks of the Scuppernong River in North Carolina about 1810. The name has now become a generic term for bronze muscadines.

Muscadines lend themselves to a number of landscape uses. Most have foliage that's dark green during the growing season, if fertilized, and an attractive yellow in the fall. They can be encouraged to climb up arbors shading patios or to run along the top wire of a boundary fence.

If you'd like to plant muscadines this fall, start preparing right now. For best fruit production, select a site with sun for half a day or more, and with well drained soil. Take a soil sample and bring it to the extension office to determine the pH of the soil.

If lime is required to raise the soil pH to the desired range of 6.0 – 6.5, you should use dolomitic limestone which contains magnesium as well as calcium. Muscadines often show magnesium deficiency, and doimitic limestone will usually apply enough to prevent it.

If you have vines that are showing interveinal chlorosis of the older leaves, it is probably magnesium deficiency. You can apply two ounces of Epsom salts per vine to supply magnesium. You should mix the dolomitic limestone with the soil to at least 12 inches deep where you will plant the vines and space muscadines 20 feet apart and 12 feet between rows.

I had the opportunity to visit Harvey and Connie Walker Muscadine farm last week. Their vineyard is on Highway 25 about nine miles North of Waynesboro on the Burke and Richmond county lines. They pride themselves with excellent trellising, pruning, irrigation and weed control. I asked Harvey what was his favorite varieties. His favorite varieties are the Triumph a bronze type and the large fruited supreme, a delicious black variety.

Muscadines have recently been found to have exciting health benefits. They're a fantastic source of dietary fiber and contain other things that help reduce heart disease.

The Walkers open this past Saturday, August 14, for pick your own 7 days a week from 8:00am to dark. The season will go until late September. For more information you can call the Walkers at (706)592-5306.