

Grapes



Grapes are a challenge to grow in our area because of the prevalence of a grape disease called Pierce's Disease. This insect borne bacterium clogs up the vascular system of the plant and effectively causes it to starve to death. There are over thirty insects that can carry this disease so controlling the insects has not been effective in controlling the disease. The solution has been to try to develop varieties (or cultivars) that are resistant to Pierce's Disease. There are no known varieties of grapes that are immune to Pierce's Disease but there are cultivars that seem to be resistant or tolerant of the disease. Selecting plants for your vineyard that have this important characteristic is essential to having a successful home grape crop.

We recommend two varieties of grapes for this area:

Black Spanish. Black Spanish is a Pierce's Disease tolerant cultivar that is a heavy producer of small to medium sized grapes; however, this variety is very susceptible to downy mildew. The dark grapes are very popular for juice, jelly and wine.

Champanel. Champanel is a hybrid grape developed in 1893 with good Pierce's disease resistance. It bears medium to large clusters of black berries. It's not really a table grape but makes really good jelly and a fruity flavored wine.

Victoria Red. One of the most exciting parts of modern horticulture is the hunt for varieties of plants that have developed away from commercial horticulture or that have been “lost” and recently “found”. The **Victoria Red** grape is such a variety that was discovered recently in Victoria, Texas. It is a seeded table grape with bright red skin color and large attractive clusters. This variety is a vigorous grower and has loose clusters (which appears to make it resistant to bunch-rot organisms); it shows tolerance to Pierce’s Disease. Victoria Red does best in well-drained soil with full sun and when spaced widely, 8-10 feet apart, and may require iron chelate in high pH soils. It is best not to over-fertilize, and to prune (typically 90% of last year’s growth, leaving some year-old wood because that is what fruits). The vines grow well on individual wires, as high as your pruning permits.