

The Land of the Scuppernong Grape

Origin of the Scuppernong Grape Was in Tyrrell County

SOURCE OF CASH

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Scuppernong is probably the cultivated variety of native can grapes. While the place of origin cannot positively be stated, the age of the variety, its pretty definitely established origin in Tyrrell County, North Carolina, before 1760. From there it was soon distributed over the eastern part of North Carolina to Roanoke Island. In this many large old Scuppernong vines to be found. Many of these are over 100 or 125 years old. An old vine growing on Roanoke Island is said to have been planted by Sir Walter Raleigh in the original Scuppernong. Those who have investigated most the origin of the variety, adhere to the theory that the original vine grew wild in Tyrrell County, in the vicinity of the Roanoke River.

In the vicinity of its origin the Scuppernong was distributed throughout the part of North Carolina planted in vineyards ranging from a few vines to many acres of these vineyards were enlarged, but for a number of years past have been abandoned. From these vineyards the variety was gradually distributed to the Coastal Plain and the section of the southeastern United States. It has steadily increased in popularity and is today the leading variety of the Muscadine grapes.

The Scuppernong vine is productive and vigorous, a rank grower, with long, slender, smooth yellowish canes, covered with small light-brown dots or lenticels. The fruit is practically free from fungus diseases and is very rarely attacked by insects. It thrives best in well drained sandy loam soils, but it also thrives on thin sandy soils.

Scuppernong grapes are not equally well adapted to all parts of North Carolina and other states in the Southeast. They reach their greatest perfection in the Coastal Plain section. The name Scuppernong is sometimes incorrectly used to designate other varieties having light-colored fruit, or even all the varieties

of Muscadine grapes, both light and dark. In the past some nurserymen have sold other light-fruited varieties as the Scuppernong. Nevertheless, the variety should be kept distinct, and it is hoped that in the future nurserymen will insist in keeping it true to name by making sure that they propagate the true Scuppernong. Other light or dark fruited varieties have other names or should be given other names.

The pollination of Scuppernong grapes has been studied very closely by various investigators. It has been determined that they are practically self-sterile, notwithstanding the fact that the blossoms have both pistils and recurved pollen-bearing stamens. In order to produce berries they must therefore be cross-pollinated with the fertile pollen of staminate Muscadine vines. The male, or staminate, vines of course produce no fruit. It is estimated that probably 75 per cent of the wild Muscadine grapevines are staminate. It has been pretty accurately established that the pollen is carried from the male to the pistillate, or female or fruiting, almost entirely by insects. In the past there has been a sufficient number of staminate vines and of insects to insure the proper cross-pollination of vines. Now, however, as the grapes are being planted in large vineyards and as the number of mild male vines is being reduced through the clearing up of the land, it becomes essential to fruit production to plant male vines here and there in the vineyards. The opinion is common that one staminate vine should be planted for every eight or ten fruiting vines.

The system of training followed in the growing of Scuppernong grapes has been and still is mostly on overhead arbors. These vary from the crudest supports under the scattering vines seen about so many southern homes to the latest overhead wire supports used in commercial plantings. These wire supports are practically identical in construction with the parrales supports used in Spain in the growing of the Alerian or so-called Malaga grapes.

Two systems of training are employed with Scuppernong grapes: (1) The horizontal or overhead system, by which the growth is spread as an overhead canopy about seven feet above the ground and supported by posts, and (2) the upright or vertical system, in which the growth is spread over a trellis.

In the overhead system a single trunk is caused to grow erect from the ground along side a permanent post. When the vine has reached the top of the post it is pinched in or

cut back, so as to make it throw out shoots to grow and spread out from the head of the vine as the spokes of a wheel radiate from the hub.

In the upright system the fruiting arms are either radiated from a low vine head, like the ribs of a fan, or they are taken off as horizontal arms from a central vertical trunk.

Where the vineyard is not given close personal attention and pruning and other vineyard practices are neglected the best results will be obtained with the overhead trellis. Moreover, such a trellis permits cross-pollinating and cultivation and is better adapted for grazing hogs, sheep or cattle on cover crops grown in the vineyard. The upright system permits caring for more vines in limited space and is well adapted for the less vigorous varieties such as Flowers and James.

In the past some persons have advocated no pruning, others moderate pruning, and still others severe pruning of Scuppernong and other Muscadine vines. The safest plan is to take an intermediate course and follow moderate pruning until it is proved that some other course is better.

For a number of years there has only been a limited market for Scuppernong grapes, but commencing with last season a well known firm of juice and wine-makers established agencies in almost every locality in Eastern North Carolina where grapes are grown and bought all of the Scuppernongs that they could get. I have been told by this firm that they will again buy Scuppernongs during the coming season, and will take other varieties of Muscadine grapes at a price somewhat lower than that paid for Scuppernong grapes.

It is time that we gave more thought to supplementing farm income with money from the sale of grapes and other minor crops. Surely the enforced acreage reduction in cotton, tobacco, wheat, corn and certain other crops will leave thousands of fields at loose ends unless we give them some attention.

A Real Start

"A real start towards returning farm prosperity has been made in North Carolina this year due largely to the fine spirit of cooperation between farmers themselves and their government."—Dean I. O. Schaub.

Late snap beans grown in Avery County are moving to outside markets at good prices. The surplus is being canned at Cranberry.

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