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In this Issue:

- Succession Planning- for wineries and vineyards-Kevin Martin- page 4
- Monitoring Grape Bud Hardiness in 2022-23-Jennifer Phillips Russo-page 8
- 2023 Winter Grower Conference Information- page 16
- Grapevines to Wine "Hang Time" Schedule and link to join- page 17
- NYSDEC How to Get Certified Course- page 18

UPCOMING EVENTS:

<u>FEB 9, 2023</u>- 10:00am-Noon- Second Virtual Event of series: Zoom, Agenda to be announced

MARCH 16, 2023 - 8:00am - 4:00pm - In Person Winter Grower Conference at SUNY Fredonia

Register here for one or both!

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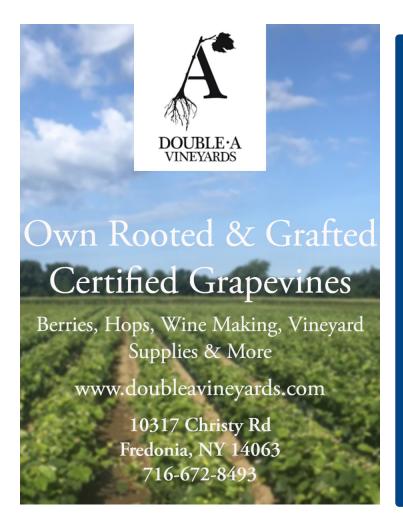




Watch Our Podcasts!

https://lergp.com/podcasts

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program is a partnership between Cornell University, Penn State University and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations in Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara County NY and Penn State Extension in Erie County PA.







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Succession Planning: For Wineries and Vineyards

Most growers give these issues a lot of thought. As we discuss succession planning, sometimes the best ideas are your ideas. Recently there has been a renewed focus on legal entities and minimizing legal risk. Succession planning often increases the number of owners in a business. In doing so, some risk mitigation may be necessary. Employee based succession plans should never be partnerships. Even though an LLC does not eliminate risk, we should take any reduction in risk possible.

A succession plan can be fairly difficult to navigate. By some measure most farm succession plans end in failure. Much of that can be attributed to an unfair definition of failure.

A successful succession plan may not necessarily guarantee that a business stays under family control, it may not guarantee lasting wealth either. The plan should allow the senior generation to live as comfortably as possible. It should also facilitate the success of the junior generation, whether that be through farming or something else.

Employee Based Succession Plans

Poor estate and succession planning can result in the failure of a winery or vineyard. For some, that can be an emotional loss. Employee based succession planning allows a senior generation to select a passionate successor with shared interests. This is not always the case for familial succession plans. Expanding the scope of what succession means and how to define successful succession can be helpful. Building a relationship with an individual, even if they're outside of the family can be rewarding.

A non-family succession plan can allow the farm business to transfer to the next generation, gradually, despite the lack of family interest. It can also allow a senior generation or even a spouse that is passive in the operation to stay more involved for a greater period of time. That benefit can improve satisfaction and the quality of life in "retirement". It may come at a cost, of course. The sustainability of a business will often require a non-family member to be reimbursed in salary as well as stock. It may reduce the overall size of the estate for children. Weighing the priorities of the senior generation and their business goals for their later years and beyond can help guide the practicality of a non-family succession plan.

This type of plan also has the opportunity to improve the business operations. An employee with the opportunity to obtain equity interest allows a winery or vineyard to recruit better talent with greater expertise. Such an interest can increase productivity, critical thinking, and innovation. If done gradually enough and early enough, this type of plan could improve profit margins to the extent that the value of the estate increases.

If only one spouse is involved in the business, it is recommended that the other spouse would divest himself from business ownership upon the death of the involved spouse. The only financial tool that can really help with divesting to a junior generation is a sizable life insurance. Given the cost of life insurance, divesting can also be partially funded by surviving spousal financing. In this situation a buy out clause would require the junior employee(s) to make payments to the surviving spouse, rather

than a lump sum payment upon death.

This type of planning is significantly under-utilized. An interested employee is theoretically a better employee. Without a doubt such an employee/owner is a valuable resource at a critical time. The farm operator that delegates very little risks leaving behind an asset that quickly becomes less valuable without owner management.

Family Based Succession Plan

This of course is the goal of most farm operations. With less than 1% of Americans farming, obviously it is historically challenging. The biggest hurdle is size.

In recent years we had observed an increase in next generation growers. Healthy grape prices were timed to coincide with high unemployment and a recession. After a period of struggling grape prices strong economic opportunities exist for young growers both on and off the farm. Emerging next generation children have options at the moment.

A growth in operational capacity is typically necessary for the temporary support of two full-time owners, rather than one. For wineries with an average bottle price below \$20, it typically means pushing case sales up near 10,000. Skilled labor is in short supply when it comes to wineries. Scale is not a big issue as many wineries hit 10,000 cases. Larger size wineries might be more practical depending on the skills the next generate brings. Are the skills and interests general or specific? Wineries in this region may have marketing channels where juice and wine is sold in bulk vs. wineries that sell 75% of their product in the tasting room at higher price points. When deciding if the business is right sized, consider net profitability and labor needs more than case sales.

The size of a vineyard operation can be difficult to define. There is variation in vineyard management practices that growers can use to manipulate profit margins. On one extreme, bulk Concord growers need to work toward 300 acres to support two families. One thing we do see as an important variable is the age, assets and income needs of owners. 300 acres seems like a reasonable goal for two generations that will have a very long overlapping career. Career overlap for next generation farming is somewhere between 10 and 35 years. Next generation growers may find that farming is a second career, not their only career. Also as an alternative to size, one member can supplement income with off-farm labor. Highly leveraged operations that expand quickly, for example, may rely on this method to mitigate financial risk. An attempt to expand the farm operation and work off-farm requires carefully crafting a plan. Expansion can obviously create a cash crunch. Off-farm income, however, might create a time crunch. If you don't have time to finish that last pre-bloom spray, yields can suffer. It is important to structure and time growth in ways that work with the financial and managerial realities of the operation. Communication and expectations are key to establishing realistic goals about size.

While the analysis of business health is particularly important, personal finance cannot be overlooked. Median household income in Pennsylvania is \$67,600. Wineries and vineyards often build businesses with net revenue that regularly exceeds median household income. Doing so, however, takes considerable capital and time. Median household income, for growers that are not working outside of the business, can be a good benchmark to see if net profitability can support income needs.

The personal financial health of the senior generation varies considerably. Not only do businesses have varying levels of success, personal financial decisions and retirement goals also vary greatly.

Asset recommendations vary from advisor to advisor. A typical long-term retirement will require assets

of approximately 25 times earnings. Business owners may gradually phase into retirement, potentially working much longer than typical retirees. Even so, assets at retirement age provide a great deal of flexibility in succession planning. The senior generation inevitably becomes less productive (though often still shockingly productive!) Also, the junior generation may become less productive and that is not necessarily planned or communicated. These challenges for the junior generation do not reduce income needs. For the senior generation income needs might be reduced. Communication and expectation are crucial to establishing an equitable arrangement.

Management Transfer Plan

Building a healthy winery business that supports the goals and expectations for net revenue is just one step toward success. Another critical element is a management transfer plan. Most family operated vineyards are run as a sole proprietorship. Even an LLC, S-Corp or C-Corp is typically run with one individual exclusively holds all titles and responsibilities above day laborer. A division of that management structure, along with a planned out evolution is necessary for success.

There are two temptations, mostly based on grower personality, that are important to avoid. Some business owners like to shut down the stressful parts of the job and prefer to give up all control and responsibility immediately. In this scenario, the next generation is thrown into the deep end without a life jacket. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a senior generation may be unwilling to give up any decision-making. The junior generation is a day laborer with an equity interest. Eventually he too will be thrown into the deep end. With the senior generation unwilling to give up control of management decisions, it happens too late.

A management transfer plan should first capitalize on the strengths of the junior generation. Whether

it is computerized payroll management and fiscal analysis of operations or it is soil health analysis, the junior generation needs to be slowly empowered in a way that maximizes success and confidence. Eventually he will have to master all aspects of the business and any relative weaknesses should be addressed. That may involve working closely together on certain aspects of the business. It may also involve outside training. While it is important to have both generations involved in management, it is also important to cross train. For the long-term sustainability of the business, undue reliance on an individual's skillset is not usually a good solution.

Planning for The Unexpected: Buy-Sell Agreement

There are a number of different tools and techniques to plan for the unexpected and to mitigate risk. One element that should be included in any transfer plan that involves a period of joint ownership should include a buysell agreement.



This type of agreement allows a partner to exit the business in the event of an unexpected change. Such an agreement spells out the timeline for closing. It either spells out a methodology for valuation or a predetermined valuation. When family is involved, a predetermined discount on the percentage of valuation to prevent the purchase from undermining the farm business. If it is anticipated that finances for all parties will allow a less than immediate payout, an installment plan, rather than a discount, would be another appropriate tool to prevent the buying partner(s) from becoming overleveraged.

A management transfer plan may not need to be communicated in detail to extended family members. Individuals outside interested owners should have an understanding of the buy-sell agreement. It's not that they should necessarily have input, just the information. It has a significant ability to impact them financially if things head down an unexpected path. Communicating the plan is key to avoiding conflict.

Succession planning can often be a complex endeavor. The value of expertise should not be overlooked. While it is important to control costs, devoting some monetary resources to succession planning can be an excellent investment. Once you know what your goals are, lawyers and financial advisors can be great at providing unique tools to help you reach those goals.





Viticulture

Jennifer Phillips Russo, Viticulture Extension Specialist, LERGP

Monitoring Grape Bud Hardiness in 2022-23

Dr. Jason Londo, and I have been collaborating on grapevine cold hardiness monitoring since 2019 while he was a Research Geneticist with the USDA-ARS Grape Genetics Unit, located at Cornell AgriTech in Geneva, New York. Jason joined Cornell University's Horticulture Section faculty in January 2022 as an associate professor of fruit crop physiology and climate adaptation. Dr. Londo's lab focuses on understanding the interaction between climate stresses and genetic diversity in fruit crops, manifested as physiological optimization and adaptation. Major projects focus on field, greenhouse, and molecular approaches to studying physiology in apples and grapes. Topics include the transcriptomic and methylomic drivers of winter physiology, cold hardiness and dormancy, rootstock-scion physiological interaction, phenotypic plasticity and climate change resilience and optimization.

Dr. Londo manages the Cornell grapevine cold hardiness monitoring program and <u>associated</u> <u>website</u>. His current research is focusing on understanding aspects of winter hardiness and spring deacclimation in apples and grapes to identify the rootstocks and scion combinations that provide the greatest resistance to early winter warming conditions.

Jason's extension program goals are to provide research driven-tools and information to the New York fruit crop industry focusing on adapting crops to climate-change-induced environmental stress. He works collaboratively with other faculty members, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and stakeholders to identify climate induced disorders, develop mitigation methods, and improve the resilience and sustainability of fruit crop production through applied research.

One of our collaborations includes monitoring grapevine cold hardiness. The following is the context from the New York Wine and Grape Foundation grant: Winter and spring temperature profiles are departing from the range of variability the New York climate regions had experienced from the mid-1950s to the 1990s. In 2012, unseasonably warm temperatures in March prompted the earliest budburst in history and led to a series of post-budburst frost events that reduced the Concord crop by 25%. While 15 of the last 16 years have seen global temperature records, January 2014 brought the arctic vortex south, and with it several sub-zero temperature episodes, with significant bud and trunk injury to Niagara grapes, some hybrids and V. vinifera in western and central New York. In 2015, a cold spell brought temperatures down to -22 to -29 °F in mid-February. Since the winters of 2016-2017, midwinter-low temperatures have been more moderate, with only modest levels of bud injury. In recent years, we have seen a return of rapid polar vortex events that has lead to sporadic damage across the Finger Lakes in 2021-2022, but our proximity to Lake Erie protected local growers. Similarly, the Christmas 2022 bomb cyclone caused an extreme drop in temperatures over a very short amount of time. It is clear that while winters may be getting milder, they are still highly variable.

The trend is for warmer temperatures to extend further into the fall, and for episodes of warmer weather in the spring, interspersed with frosts. This became clear in December 2015, when daytime maximum temperature was above freezing 30 of 31 days, and both daytime maximum and nighttime minimum were above freezing during 18 of the 31 days of December. Warm temperatures before mid-winter lows can delay cold weather acclimation of grapevine buds and trunks, while mid-winter lows (late December to Early February) still potentially reach damaging levels – as the cold January temperatures associated with the polar vortex event dropped temperatures to the -8 to -14 F range

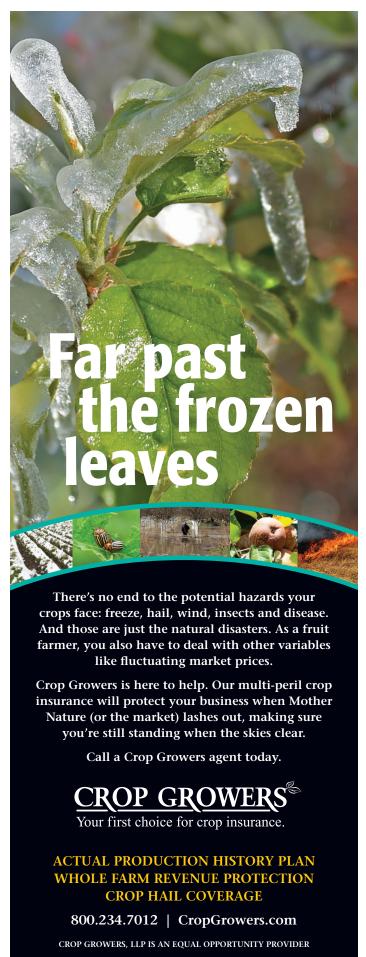
in the Finger Lakes and Lake Erie regions. Both mid-winter lows and spring frost injury are key concerns to grape growers. Finally, the regional grape industry has expanded beyond traditional regions with water-moderated climates to inland areas subject to more 'continental' climates – and therefore to more frequent spring frost episodes.

Digital Thermal Analysis (DTA), which involves collecting and subjecting buds to controlled freezing runs, is a proven method for documenting bud freezing temperatures. Used in conjunction with min/max temperature records, it has been proven to correlate well with observed bud injury in vineyards (determined by direct examination of buds, i.e. 'bud cutting').

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program has acquired equipment (freezers and data acquisition units) to use Digital Thermal Analysis (DTA) at the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory (CLEREL). The DTA unit at CLEREL allows the research and extension team to process extension samples at the CLEREL and do more frequent and detailed evaluations. A major goal is to document how crop adjustment and crop load impacts bud hardiness and potential crop of Concord and Niagara grapes – and thereby evaluate the economic risks of over cropping and potential freeze damage based on production practices. This information would allow grape growers to adjust practices and respond to climatic events.

Practical Importance and Previous Work

Low Temperature Exotherms. Since the winter of 2009-2010, we have conducted surveys of winter bud hardiness (called Low Temperature Exotherms or LTEs) in four selected cultivars, representing a range of cold sensitivity. Procedures for determining LTEs (Mills et al 2006) are well established, and we have posted results for the industry and extension newsletters on a bud hardiness web page. (Fig. 1, below)



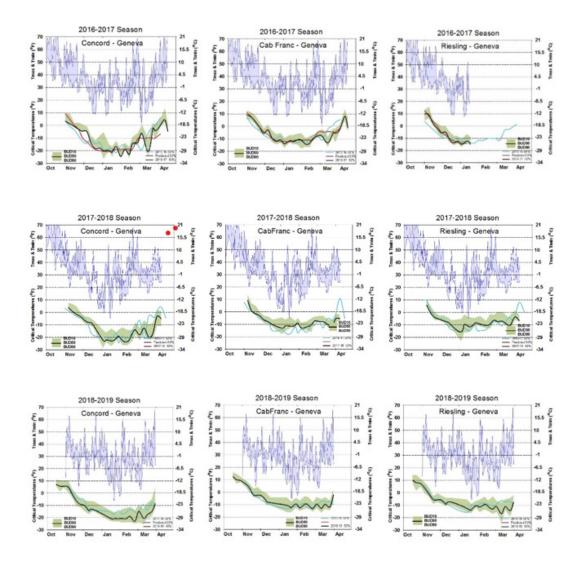


Figure 1. Daily min/max temperatures and bud freezing temperatures (Low Temperature exotherms from laboratory tests on dormant buds; black line is LT50) in Cabernet franc, Riesling, and Concord at Geneva in 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Note where minimum temperature overlaps with bud-freezing LT50 for Cabernet franc and Riesling in both 2015 and 2016, but not for Concord. To date in 2017-2018, one cold episode (Early January) reached sub-zero temperatures. In 2018-2019, LT50s were well below winter minimum temperatures, which reached -5°F in late January and -2°F in early February. Current season data collection is ongoing, but vines are showing good levels of cold hardiness.

In 2014 and 2015, results from the midwinter LTE measurements gave growers an early warning and 'heads-up' to growers to do extensive bud injury surveys in their vineyards and adjust pruning levels accordingly. Regional extension programs in the Lake Erie, Finger Lakes, and Hudson Valley, followed up with extensive bud collections and evaluations in March 2014. The documentation of the severity and extent of bud injury led to efforts by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to evaluate the probable extent of crop loss and winter injury in 2014, to allow farm wineries to purchase grapes out of state. This was again pursued in 2015, with determination by NYSDAM that significant injury was limited to a few varieties and geographical areas but didn't reach 40% crop reduction statewide. The past winters (2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019) had no significant winter low temperatures, and minimal bud injury was observed.

There were many objectives of this research including weekly monitoring of LTE's during acclimation, dormancy, and deacclimation across the Lake Erie, Finger Lakes, and Hudson Valley grape regions.

Another objective was to post the data to the at <u>Bud Hardiness Data Website Click Here</u>, where winter hardiness data from differential thermal analysis has been shared with industry since 2009, and is posted continually during the dormant season, providing growers with up to date information about potential winter injury to buds. Dr. Londo and his lab were tasked to develop a temperature-driven model that is based on real measurements of the physical response of vines to different deacclimation temperatures. They used data collected from this project to validate the model, which we hope will provide New York and Pennsylvania growers with accurate predictions of bud freezing temperatures (based on daily min/max temperatures) and will be accessible regionwide through the NEWA weather site. Once this system has been validated, we'll discontinue collections at commercial sites.

Having bud hardiness and injury information posted in a grower-friendly format allows growers to make better decisions about the need to monitor and respond to potential injury events. Our information has identified freeze injury events in two of the past five years. Equipment for DTAs at CLEREL expanded the number and extent of LTE's in the region, and allow additional information to be collected from existing research projects at CLEREL. All of this data was used to help train the model and generate accurate predictions of bud freezing temperatures.

Hans Walter-Peterson wrote a great introduction to the website in his December 2022 Newsletter, and it is paraphrased here: The landing page for the project looks very much the same as it has in the past, but when you click on the link for this year's data, you'll be met with something that looks very different than past years, but also very informative. It's important to mention up front that this new site is still a work in progress, so it is still being worked on to sort out bugs and add more information over time.

2022-2023 Low Temperature Exotherm Data (link)

The landing page looks like Figure 2. Below. Note the Cornell red pennant on the right, that is the equivalent to the 'spinning wheel of death' that we affectionately call the website's way of saying 'wait a moment while I process your request'.

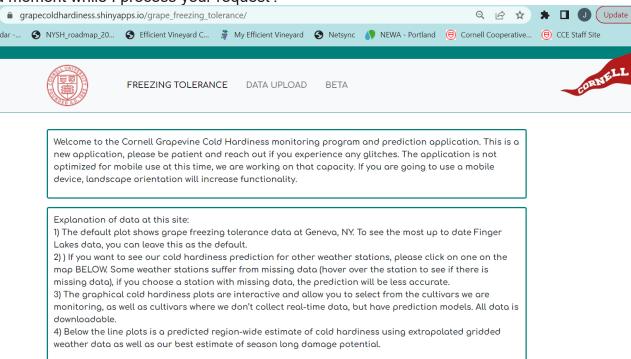


Figure 2. New Cold Hardiness Predictive Model Landing Page View.

The new site essentially has two parts. The first one is a broad, regionwide map showing estimated freezing tolerance (measured by LT50, the temperature needed to kill 50% of buds in a sample) for several vinifera, hybrid and native varieties (Figure 3). These maps are based on the models that Jason and his lab have been developing for a number of years now, plus weather data from various weather stations across the region. You can see a map of either freeze tolerance or potential damage by cultivar, with color coding on the map based on the model's output for those areas. Currently, the freeze tolerance scale stretches from a little above -20°C (-4°F) to almost -30°C (-22°F).

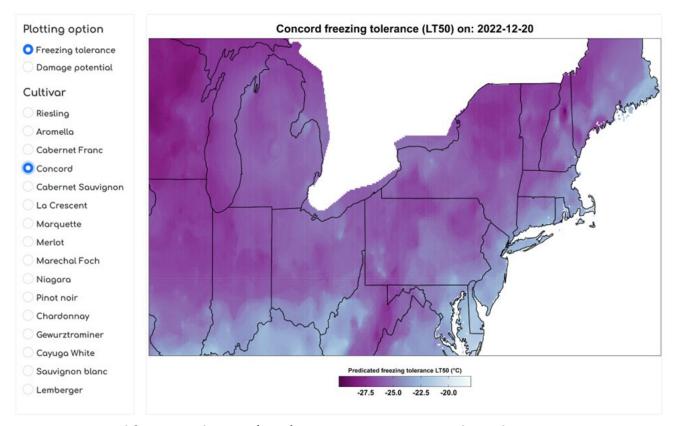


Figure 3. Concord freezing tolerance (LT50) on: 2022-12-20 map on the website.

The second part of the new site lets users drill down to more specific locations. Below the regional map, you'll find a map of the Northeast with a lot of dots on it. Each dot represents a weather station that you can select to see what the predicted LT50 values are for each of those locations based on the models. The two sites with grape clusters represent Geneva and Portland, where measurements are currently being done to continue honing the models. The results of those measurements are shown for those two locations (Figure 4).



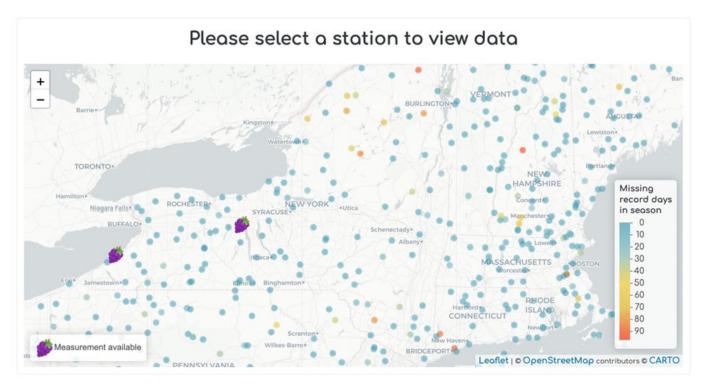


Figure 4. Map of the Northeast with a lot of dots that represents a weather station that you can select to see what the predicted LT50 values on the website.

When you select a particular station, the windows below will show the measured low temperatures at that site, along with the predicted freezing tolerance for the chosen cultivar, which can be selected by the user. These graphs will look more familiar to those who have looked at these charts in previous years. In the case of Portland (Figure 5), the chart displays the LT10, LT50 and LT90 values for each cultivar, along with the predicted LT50 value from a couple of different cold hardiness models (gray and black lines). The Londo lab has released two different cold hardiness models, one based on field experiments (NYUS.1) and is available for three cultivars (Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Concord) and a second which uses artificial intelligence methods (Auto-ML) and is available for 31 different cultivars. The website also gives you the option of seeing the cold hardiness prediction using the classical model developed by the Keller lab in Washington State (WAUS.2). This model tends to overestimate cold hardiness in our climate. If you hover your cursor over each of the lines, it will show you the value for each time point that is charted. In this case, the measured LT50 for Concord as of January 5, 2023, is -13.54°F, and the modeled LT50 (black line) was -12.10°F, compared to the other models that predicted -20.20°F for the grey-dotted line for WAUS.1 and the dark grey-dotted line of NYUS.1 prediction of -17.14°F.

Below that chart is a second one that predicts the amount of potential bud damage for that cultivar based on the weather to this point. The current chart shows 0% potential for injury because the low temperatures at Portland (Figure 5) have not reached the point where we would expect any damage. As with previous years, once the low temperatures start approaching or crossing the LT10 or LT50 lines, growers should be assessing damage in their own blocks.

The biggest advantage of having a model to predict freeze tolerance is that growers in all parts of New York and elsewhere can get an idea of how much potential bud damage there might be in their own area, not just where we are sampling.

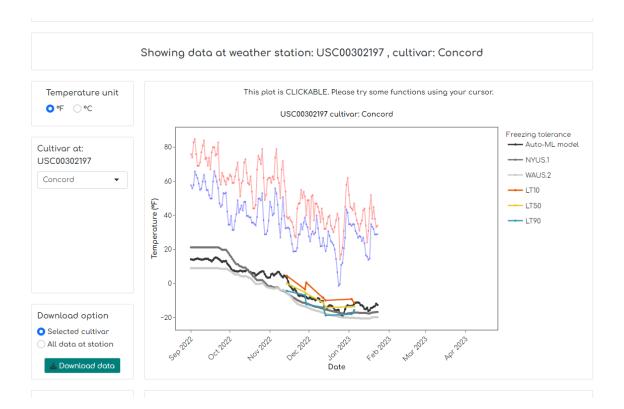
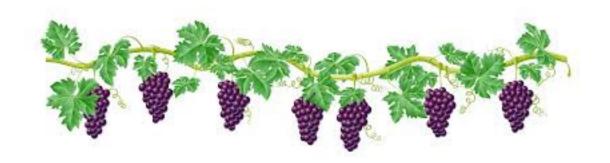




Figure 5. LT10, LT50 and LT90 values for each cultivar, along with the predicted LT50 value from the model (the gray line).

I encourage growers to check out the new site and see how it works for themselves. As I mentioned, it's still a work in progress but it provides important information about potential bud injury for growers around the state, not just a few locations in the Finger Lakes and Lake Erie regions.

This work has been a collaboration of many as this Newsletter has been as well. We will continue to work together to bring you new tools for understanding the interaction between climate stresses and genetic diversity in grapevines, manifested as physiological optimization and adaptation, such as cold hardiness fluctuations.





2023
LERGP Winter
Grape Grower
Conference
Series
Registration







2023 LERGP Winter Grower Conference Series

February 9, 2023- Virtual Event-10:00am- Noon

March 16, 2023- In Person at SUNY Fredonia- 8:00am-4:00pm

Register online or with the form on next page.

LAKE ERIE REGIONAL GRAPE PROGRAM 2023 GRAPE GROWERS' Winter Series CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

SUNY Fredonia Williams Center Thursday, March 16, 2023 Deadline for registration is Friday, March 10, 2023.

Name (1st attendee)		\$		
Farm Name				
Address, City, State, Zip Cod	e			
Phone	E-mail			
Are you enrolled in Lake Erio	e Regional Grape Program (LERGP)?	YesNo		
MEMBER	REGISTRATION FE		NON MEMBER	
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	\$25.00 (\$20.00 addl attendee)	2 Virtual Session	•	
•	\$90.00 (\$60.00 addl attendee)	In Person Conf.	•	
All 3 events	\$100.00 (\$75.00 addl attendee)	All 3 events	\$150.0	0
Additional Attendees: *Please add a \$25.00 late fee for e	ach reservation made after March 10, 2023			
Please make check payable Kate Robinson LERGP 6592 W Main Rd Portland NY 14769	e (US funds only) to LERGP (Lake I	Frie Regional Gra		AL \$ mail to:
		Date Cl	. Rec'd Amount	

Grapevines to Wine "Hang Time" Lunch Hour Schedule

- <u>January 18, 2023:</u> Volunteers from the Board-Welcome to "Hang Time" with ASEV-ES Grapevines to Wines lunch hour. Who we are and why you should tune in for our upcoming series!
- <u>February 15, 2023</u>: Michela Centinari, Penn State University-"Frost Damage...your vines are damaged; now what?" The antecedent to what to do after the frost damage leads to the basic avoidance tactic: "...and what is the Spring Frost Index?"
- March 22, 2023: Phil Brannen, University of Georgia Small Fruit Plant Pathologist-You might as well be spraying water if you're not checking for resistance.
- April 12, 2023: Justin Scheiner, Texas A&M-What to expect for this year's ASEV-ES Conference in Austin, and why you should come visit the heartland.
- <u>May 17, 2023:</u> Patricia Skinkis, Oregon State University, Viticulurist; and Gill Giese, New Mexico University- "Signature Wine"-what is it? Does a region set out to produce such an animal or do the best ones 'evolve'...?
- June 7-10, 2023: ASEV Conference in Austin, TX
- July 19, 2023: Speaker TBA. Blending fruits for value-added wines.
- August 16th, 2023: Speaker TBA. Top most common mistakes when making wine. To hang, or not to hang? Are we really compromising phenols for just Brix?
- <u>September 13, 2023:</u> Speaker TBA. Leaf change in the fall...is this a sign of healthy or unhealthy vines? We'll dig deeper into Grapevine Red Blotch and Crown gall--who's at risk?
- October 18, 2023: Speaker TBA. Losing yield from deadwood? It's all about the cut.
- November 14, 2023: Speaker TBA.-Combating the extremely cold temps. It's all about the genetics.
- <u>December 6, 2023</u>: Speaker TBA. Join our table of experts in discussion about Grapes of the South. Exploring the unknown? Where are we in variety trials? Who's tried what?



Use this link to join:

NYSDEC HOW TO GET CERTIFIED COURSE

WHEN:

March 23, 2023 10am - Noon

WHERE:

& Extension Laboratory

6592 W Main Road Portland, NY 14769

EXAM DATE:

March 30, 2023 9:30am Start Time Same Location

DISCUSSION TOPICS

NYS Pesticide Laws & Regulations

Certification Requirements

Certification Exam Process

EPA Worker Protection Standard (WPS)

SAME-DAY EXAM REG.

\$100 Exam Fee (Payable to NYSDEC)

Exam paperwork provided & completed onsite

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This publication may contain pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may not be registered in all states, may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use should be directed to the appropriate extension agent or state regulatory agency. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Cornell and Penn State Cooperative Extensions, and their employees, assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of any chemicals for pesticide usage. No endorsements of products are made or implied.

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Contact the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program if you have any special needs such as visual, hearing or mobility impairments.

CCE does not endorse or recommend any specific product or service.

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