Botany and History of Muscadine Grapes

Dr. Patrick Conner
Muscadinia
- *V. rotundifolia*
- *V. munsoniana*
- *V. popenoei*

- 40 chromosomes
- unbranched tendrils
- berries abscise from cluster
- berries have thick skin and fruity aroma
- small clusters
- dense wood
- continuous pith

Vitis

Euvitis
- *V. vinifera* – wine grapes
- *V. labrusca* – concord grapes

- 38 chromosomes
- branched tendrils
- cluster picked
- big clusters
- light wood
- diaphragms at nodes
V. munsoniana

Native to south Florida and a narrow strip along the gulf coast.

- Noble
- Regale
- Magnolia
- Tarheel
Muscadine Production

1. Georgia – 898 acres
2. North Carolina – 662 acres
3. Mississippi – 600 acres
4. Florida – 551 acres
5. South Carolina – 498 acres
Native Muscadines

- Found growing wild throughout the Southeast.
- Excellent regional adaptation.
- Muscadine was the first domesticated American grape.

"In all of the world the like abundance of this grape is not to be found"
-Amadas and Barlowe, 1584.
Scuppernong or Muscadine?

**Scuppernong** – from the scuppernong river in North Carolina. Refers to a particular cultivar of bronze grape that was widely planted in that region.

**Muscadine** – should refer to all *V. rotundifolia* grapes of which 'Scuppernong' is one cultivar. Often used to refer to black colored varieties.

'Scuppernong' muscadine
Mother Scuppersnong

• Planted in 1584 (1770's?) in the Roanoke colony, still alive and producing.
Early Production – Muscadine Wine

• Very popular from 1809 – 1919, never recovered after prohibition and development of California vinifera industry. 'Virginia Dare' was the most popular wine in U.S. in that period.

“Show me the way to your homes” says Virginia Dare. “So you folks can enjoy the only wine of its kind in the world”.
First Cultivars - Wild selections

Female vines

- 'Scuppernong'
- 'Thomas'
- 'Flowers'
- 'Mish'
- 'James'
- 'Memory'

Male vines

- 'White Male #1'
- 'Black Male'

'Scuppernong' was the dominant cultivar from 1750-1947.
Several different 'Scuppernong' cultivars likely exist.
History of the UGA muscadine program

First era: 1909-1938
H.P. Stuckey and J.G. Woodroof

• 3 female vines and 2 male vines used as parents.

• 13 cultivars released (1917-1938).

• 'Hunt', 'Dulcet', 'Yuga', 'Creek' most important cultivars.

• Selected for yield, sweet tender pulp, and non-shattering berries. Often cluster picked.
History of the UGA muscadine program

Second era: 1951-1968

B.O. Fry

'Fry', 'Cowart', 'Higgins', 'Jumbo'

- Selected for large size, bronze color, high soluble solids.

- 'Higgins' created – source of large size in most muscadine cultivars.

- Lower vine vigor and increased susceptibility to fruit rots.

'Higgins' - 1955
Pedigree for Supreme

Supreme
  └── Black Fry
        └── Fry
             ├── Cowart
             │     └── USDA 19-11
             │         └── Ga 28
             └── USDA 19-11
                     └── Ga 19-13
                                      └── Ga 20-38
                                               └── Higgins
                                                      └── Ga 27-9B
                                                               └── Yuga
                                                                   └── White Male
                                                                           └── Dulcet
                                                                                       └── Burgaw
                                                                                        └── Higgins
                                                                                                             └── Ga 20-38
                                                                                                                     └── Haggin
                                                                                                                             └── White Male
                                                                                                                                   └── Hunt
'Fry' muscadine

'Fry' most important fresh use cultivar developed, 9.3 g / berry.

Bronze
Large Size
High soluble solids
Good green flavor

Fruit rot susceptible
Female

'Fry' - 1971
Perfect flowered cultivars developed.

'Mcowart', first perfect flowered cultivar with good fruit quality released.
History of the UGA muscadine program

Third era: 1969-1996

R.P. Lane

Wanted large size of 'Fry' combined with perfect flowers.

• 'Triumph' – bronze perfect flowered.
• 'Summitt' – female with higher productivity than 'Fry'.
• 'Tara' – large size with perfect flowers.
• 'Scarlett' – new red color.
• 'Golden Isles' – juice grape with less pronounced muscadine taste

Most of these cultivars feature 'Fry' heavily in their pedigree.
Current Goals of the Program

- Very large berry size with perfect flowers.
  - Need to replace all female cultivars.

- Pistillate cultivars
  - Fry – 13g
  - Summitt – 10g
  - Supreme – 18g
  - Sweet Jenny – 16g
  - Pam – 18g
  - Darlene – 16g

- Self-fertile cultivars
  - Cowart – 9g
  - Nesbitt – 10g
  - Tara – 13g
  - Triumph – 9g
Avg. % full crop 2004-2008

- Pistillate cultivars
  - Fry – 70
  - Supreme – 90
  - Sweet Jenny – 50
  - Pam – 60
  - Scarlett – 30
  - Darlene - 40

- Self-fertile cultivars
  - Alachua - 100
  - Cowart – 90
  - Nesbitt – 100
  - Polyanna – 80
  - Tara – 90
  - Triumph - 100
• Self-fertile cultivars are usually smaller than female cultivars.
  – Linkage?
  – Metaxenia?

• Minimum = 10-11 grams, 1 inch diameter

'Supreme'
14.7 g

Ga. 5-1-38
13.9 g
Too much productivity!
Euvitis x Muscadinia Hybrids
– Expanding the germplasm

Possible traits from *Euvitis*
– Fruit rot resistance
– Stable juice color
– Earlier ripening
– Improved berry flesh
– Larger clusters
NC B4-50
Dearing, 1917  *V. rotundifolia* x Black Morocco (*V. vinifera*)
'Southern Home' is reported to be highly resistant to ripe rot, bitter rot, and black rot, and has shown no symptoms of Pierce’s disease (*Xylella fastidiosa*).