Preface to the Tenth Edition

The continuing demand for Growing Grapes in Minnesota by growers, extension services, foreign affiliates, libraries, and others since the original publication has been encouraging to the members of the Minnesota Grape Growers Association. This is the tenth revision of the original text, and includes Best Management Practices inserted into each section.

The objective in all editions has been to provide updated information regarding cold climate viticulture and to update the text with new practical and technical developments. This edition also has been updated with current facts and figures, and introduces best management practices to enable growers to rate their current practices to the expectations of a well-managed vineyard. It is hoped that the material presented will be a useful reference and practical guide to grape growing in northern regions with severe winters.

For additional copies of this book or if interested in becoming a member of the Minnesota Grape Growers Association, please visit www.mngrapes.org.
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Grapes are not new to Minnesota. Wild grapes (*Vitis riparia*), are found everywhere along our rivers and lakes extending into the Dakotas and parts of Canada. In fact, table grape production developed in this area as early as 1880-1900, growing mostly Concord and Delaware Grapes. A USDA estimate indicates that the Minnesota pioneer grape crop reached its peak in 1900, with production of 600,000 lbs. of grapes. Unfortunately, this early industry soon declined, due to the development of transcontinental rail transportation, the resulting economic competition from California vineyards, the severity of local winter temperatures, and introduction of growth regulator (phenoxy) herbicides such as 2,4-D in the mid-1940’s.

It should be realized that limited grape cultivars (cultivated variety\(^1\)) will grow successfully in this area without special care. European (*Vitis vinifera*) grapes, those widely grown in California, usually are killed at 0 to -15 degrees F. Even Concord, the standard of hardiness for American cultivars, commonly exhibits cold injury at -20 degrees F. Most French-American hybrids can only withstand -10 to -25 degrees F. With yearly winter lows of -25 to -35 F. in Minnesota, experience has shown that very few traditional cultivars can be reliably grown here. Although special cultural practices have been developed to grow marginal vines in cold climates, the cultivars released by the University of Minnesota grape breeding program, Elmer Swenson and other cold climate private breeders have the extreme cold hardiness needed to survive without winter protection. They combine excellent cold hardiness with good wine and eating quality and are a dependable choice as new plantings are established. These cultivars have become readily available to both the commercial and home grower.

Widespread interest in growing grapes is emerging in Minnesota as well as other cold climates where grape culture has not been traditional. Wineries and vineyards are developing at a rapid pace and the demand for locally grown grapes is steadily increasing. It is an exciting time to be part of grape growing and we hope this book will help you get started growing grapes in the north!

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\(^1\) “Variety” is a botanical term to designate a variation within a species, such as the difference between a peach and nectarine that is a fuzz less mutation of a peach. The scientific name of a peach is *Prunus persica* and the nectarine is *Prunus persica var. nucipersica*. The term cultivar is used to distinguish a cultivated variation within a species.