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WINES & VINES

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Tips on Buying Grapevines

It is important to order the right varieties based on what you need and what will grow on your site. The increased emphasis being placed on clones is a complicating factor, especially when research on how they can be expected to perform in the various regions of the East is still in its early stages.

Vine quality is very important. Guidelines that can be used prior to grafting include absence of stress, disease and cold damage; balanced nutrition, evenly ripened on all sides; small pith to wood ratio; no big bull wood nor flat or deeply grooved wood. Bench grade cuttings should be no less than 7 mm in diameter. Reasonable internode lengths with a minimum of three buds is preferred. It is best to avoid machine harvested vines to be sure there is no mechanical damage.

Quality parameters for grafted vines are also important. Each vine in the bundle should be relatively the same diameter, 3/8 to 1/2 inch. If pruned back, the new growth on the scion should have a least three live buds, and the diameter of the scion should be a minimum of 3/16 inch. The graft union must be completely callused around the circumference of the scion and rootstock, and the callus must not be excessively large. The root system must cover the diameter of the base of the plant, and the roots should be checked to make sure they are alive and that there are no symptoms of mildew.

Growers need to inspect vines closely prior to planting. If you are ordering vines in quantity, it can be worth visiting the nursery in early July to check the callusing and initial growth. Contracts and agreements between growers and nurseries are becoming more common and can specify freedom from a particular disease as well as quality specifications.