Five Promising New Grapes --- Two of Them Seedless

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Among the thousands of grape seedlings that must be grown in the grape breeding program at the Experiment Station at Geneva, occasional selections stand out conspicuously from the rest. For several years now, visitors to the Station vineyards and to the annual meetings and exhibits of the New York State Fruit Testing Cooperative Association have been impressed with five of these selections—two of which are seedless.

So well have these five seedlings performed over the years that they are now believed to have demonstrated sufficient promise to justify naming and distributing for more extensive testing under a wider range of soil and climatic conditions.

Two of the five are white seedless types and have been named "Himrod" and "Romulus," in keeping with a practice of long standing of using place names in the state's grape-growing regions in the naming of new grape varieties.

Two of the newcomers are black dessert types and have been named "Alden" and "Bath."

The fifth is a red dessert and wine grape and has been quite fittingly named "Naples."

Planting stocks of these new sorts are now available from the New York State Fruit Testing Association which cooperates with the Experiment Station in the propagation and distribution of the new fruits originating in the Station's breeding program.

Why Are They "Promising"

One of the most popular grapes in our markets is the small-berried Thompson Seedless grown on the West Coast. The

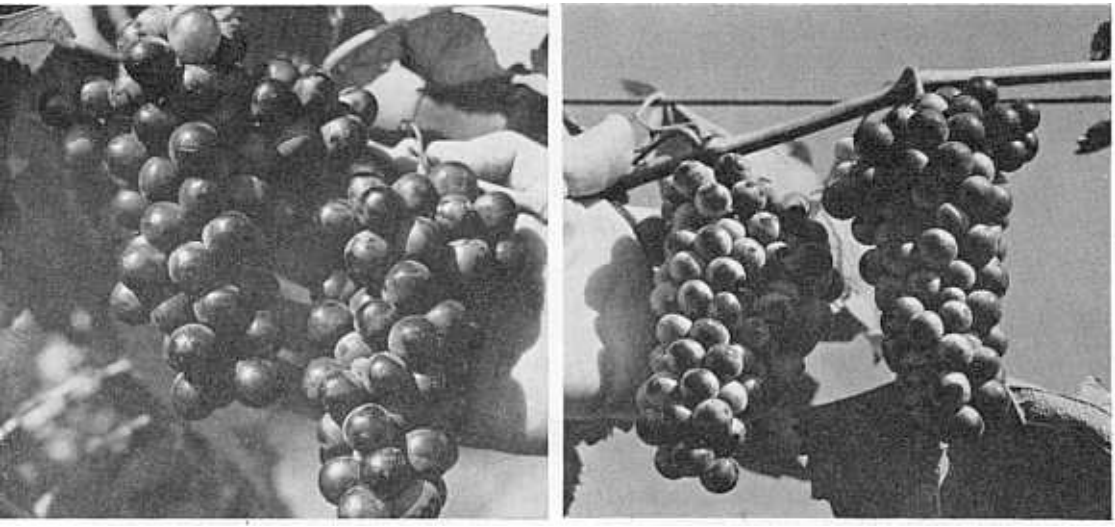


Fig. 1. Alden (left) is reddish black. Bath (right) is black. These two late September grapes of good quality require shorter pruning than Concord.

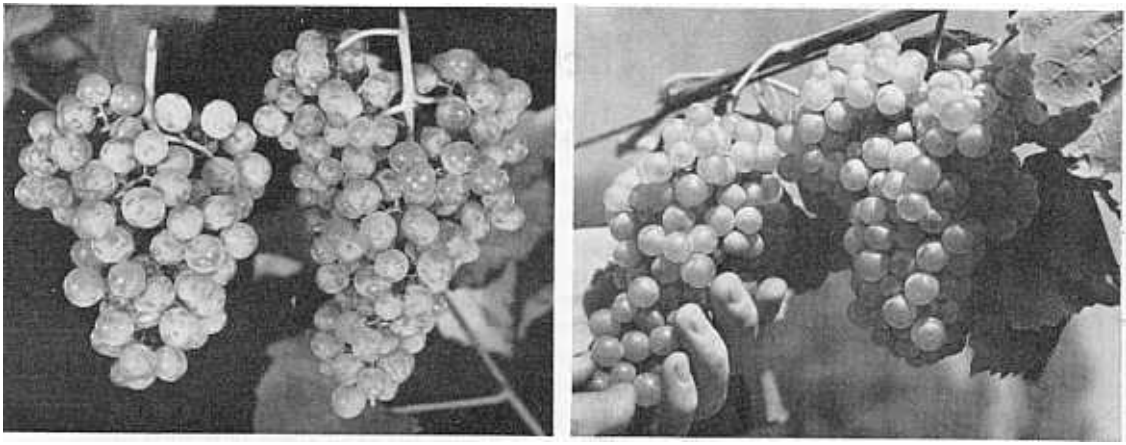


Fig. 2. Himrod (left) and Romulus are yellow seedless grapes, ripening about two weeks apart, recommended for trial where the winter temperature does not drop below 15° F.

cross between our hardy early Ontario and Thompson Seedless has given at least five very promising new grapes that resemble the Thompson Seedless parent. One was named Interlaken Seedless in 1947 and sent out for trial. Many favorable comments have already been received on this variety and numerous requests have been made for vines of the sister seedlings that vary in size of cluster, berries, and time of ripening. Two of these are Himrod and Romulus and at least two more should be released as soon as stock is available.

Consumers who prefer the texture of the firm, tender-fleshed European grapes are particularly interested in the Alden, even though its clusters are often loose. Furthermore, its large attractive berries should command a ready market.

Bath is very productive like its parent Fredonia. It ripens later, is free from foxiness and its berries do not mildew.

One of New York's favorite grapes is the Delaware. Unfortunately its berries are very small and have too tender a skin. Naples is very similar to this variety in color and flavor but possesses a larger and looser cluster, larger berries, and a tougher skin.

These new varieties are recommended for trial in areas where the winter temperature does not drop below −15° F. and where the Concord ripens. In the colder areas Alden, Himrod, and Romulus may require winter protection.

Objectives of Grape Breeding

One of the oldest projects of the Experiment Station, the grape breeding program, has as its main objective the production of better varieties of grapes for our growers, consumers, and processors. Thirty-three varieties have been named and sent out for trial and at least half of these have obtained recognition either as dessert or processing grapes. Those that have fallen by the wayside had such defects as susceptibility to winter injury, to skin cracking during wet seasons, or to mildew. Certain ones were not sufficiently productive. These were varieties with reflexed stamens. Such varieties are pollen-sterile and require cross-pollination for fruit development. During recent years no grapes of this type have been sent out for trial.

Other objectives in the grape breeding program are to obtain good table grapes, earlier varieties with the juice characters of the Concord, and better grapes for the wineries. At one time, Concord, Delaware and Catawba were extensively used for dessert, but these kinds have

now been replaced by European varieties brought in from California. Grapes to be accepted by the trade must possess a skin tough enough for handling as well as good quality and appearance.

At the present time approximately 90 per cent of our Concords are used by the processors. An earlier variety of equal merit would insure ripening every season, enable the processors to start their operation earlier and to carry their work over a longer period.

Catawba, the mainstay of the wineries, unfortunately does not fully ripen more than two or three years out of five. Delaware, another excellent wine grape, may be killed to the ground during severe winters and its tender skin and tight clusters make it susceptible to cracking and decay.

European Grapes Used in Breeding

To obtain varieties of superior quality, appearance, and hardiness the breeder uses grapes with European characteristics as one parent and so-called hardy American varieties for the other parent. In fact, the grape industry in eastern America did not exist until natural hybrids of similar derivation, like the Catawba and Isabella, were discovered.

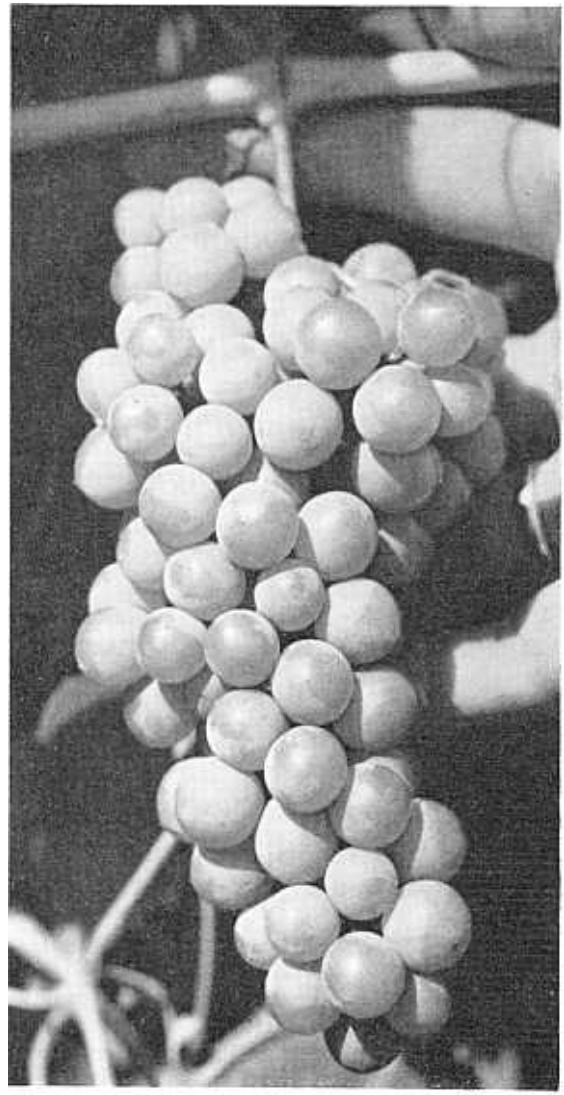
High quality can easily be obtained in first generation crosses between European and our American varieties, which are already hybrids, but many other essential characters are requisite for a good variety. Some of the necessary characteristics are winter-hardiness, productiveness, resistance of foliage and fruit to insect and disease injuries, large attractive clusters of berries, excellent texture and quality, and a tough enough skin to withstand handling.

Under Test 20 Years

This year five grape seedlings that have been on trial for over 20 years and tested in several different locations have been named so that they can be still more widely disseminated and tested.

Two of these varieties that are white seedless grapes were obtained in a cooperative grape breeding project carried on between this Station and Doctor A. B. Stout, formerly of the New York Botanical Gardens.

Fig. 3. Naples is a good quality red grape resembling Delaware, and has scored well in New York wine tests.



Himrod

Himrod, formerly known as Geneva 15310, was produced in 1928 by crossing Ontario with the Sultanina (Thompson Seedless). Its clusters are large, tapering, and compact and its berries are medium, oval, greenish yellow, melting, tender, juicy, and vinous-flavored.

Himrod ripens about with Interlaken Seedless, that is the first week of September. The clusters are larger than those of Interlaken Seedless, but the berries average smaller, white in color, and practically seedless.

Romulus

Romulus (Geneva 15291) is a sister to Himrod but ripens about two weeks later. The clusters are large, tapering shouldered and compact. The berries are free from seeds and are small, roundish, greenish yellow.

Romulus is a melting, juicy, sweet, vinous-flavored white grape of good quality.

Alden

Alden (Geneva 13035) was obtained in 1926 by crossing Ontario with Grox Guillaume. Several very promising seedlings were obtained from this cross, but unfortunately some of them cracked badly during wet seasons.

The clusters of Alden are large, tapering, and loose. The berries are large, oval, and reddish black in color. The flesh of Alden is juicy, meaty, tender, sweet, and vinous. The quality is good.

Alden ripens about the end of September. It requires shorter pruning than Concord.

Bath

Bath (Geneva 18149) was obtained in 1930 from a cross between Fredonia and Geneva 10805 (Chasselas Rose Violet × Mills).

Bath has a vigorous and very productive vine. The clusters are medium in size, compact, and tapering. The berries are medium, round oval, and black. The flesh is tender, juicy, sweet, free from foxiness, and of good quality.

Bath ripens the last week in September. It requires more severe pruning than Concord in order to prevent overbearing.

Naples

Naples (Geneva 17594) was produced in 1928 by crossing Delaware with a seedling from a cross between Mills and Iona.

Naples has a vigorous and productive vine. The clusters are larger and less compact than those of Delaware and are tapering and shouldered. The berries are larger than those of Delaware. The skin of Naples is similar in color to that of Delaware but tougher. The flesh is slightly tough, juicy, sweet, and good in quality.

The appearance and flavor of Naples remind one strongly of Delaware. In wine tests, Naples has scored above well-known wine varieties.

The season for Naples is one to two weeks later than for Delaware.

—*Farm Research*, October, 1952.

Meadow Mice Show Feeding Preference for Mahaleb Cherry

The following is extracted from the Semi-Annual Report of Predatory Animal and Rodent Control Work, issued by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lafayette, Indiana. (July to December, 1952):

"Of particular interest was some rather bad damage to Montmorency cherry trees in Door County, Wisconsin. Individual trees examined showed that this damage was confined to the Mahaleb rootstock, as the girdled areas stopped below the graft. Even though meadow mice were solely responsible, girdling was done below the ground line and was not noticed until the dirt was dug away from the tree bases."

The fruit pictured on the last page of No. 2 of Vol. 7 is a Beech Plum. —Ed.