

LUBBOCK ONLINE

SITE WEB

Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

PLACE AN AD SUBSCRIBE TO THE PAPER

WHAT

WHERE

Get [Yellow Advantage](#)

HEAVY RAIN FOG/MIST **62° F**

Get more Lubbock weather

- NEWS
- SPORTS
- ENTERTAINMENT
- LIVING
- OPINION
- SPOTTED
- BLOGS
- OBITUARIES
- JOB
- CARS
- HOMES
- RENTALS
- CLASSIFIEDS
- SERVICES

[Home](#) | [Local News](#)

Local News

A A

High Plains growers take cotton to wine grapes

By Henri Brickey | AVALANCHE-JOURNAL
Saturday, September 06, 2008
 Story last updated at 9/6/2008 - 2:17 am

Cotton is still the king of crops on the South Plains, but a growing number of traditional farmers are turning up their rows and planting them with what is becoming another signature crop of the West Texas High Plains - wine grapes.

And this week, a wine industry group was touring this South Plains crop - which is becoming an alternative to traditional water-hungry row crops.

Neal Newsom, one of the pioneers of West Texas wine grape growing, came from a cotton-farming background and planted his first wine grapes in 1986 on his farm near Plains, about 90 miles southwest of Lubbock.

Back then, there were only a few wineries in Texas and Newsom's tiny 3-acre wine grape farm was an experiment at most.

Two decades later, Newsom cultivates 90 acres of wine grapes in an assortment of varieties. Cabernet and merlot have been dependable wine-making grapes for the High Plains for two decades, but now Newsom and other grape growers are expanding into other varieties in search of the perfect fit for the region's unique weather and soil conditions.

"We're still looking for the right root stalk for West Texas," Newsom said.

And he isn't searching alone.

At least four Brownfield-area farmers within a few miles from each other have started wine vineyards over the past 24 months.

And vineyard owners who have already established themselves in the area are growing in size.

On Friday, Newsom unveiled the first phase of a new wine production facility on his farm near Plains.

"It's an exciting time," he said.

Vijay Reddy, another longtime cotton farmer, is also excited about wine grapes.

Eleven years ago, Reddy started experimenting with small sections of wine grapes on his farm near Brownfield.

Today, Reddy Vineyards consists of more than 90 acres of wine grapes.

Over the next half decade, Reddy plans to devote another 60 acres of his farmland to wine grapes.

"I think we're going to have a great future in this part of the country," Reddy said Friday from his vineyard. "Good times are coming."

Veteran wine grape growers like Newsom and Reddy have known for years how good their grapes are. And now others are realizing the same thing.

"The High Plains is the premier wine grape-growing region in the state," said Bobby Champion Jr., state coordinator for wine marketing with the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Champion was one of a group of wine industry leaders touring the South Plains region south of Lubbock this week.

The group, which included wine writers, lobbyists, researchers and other wine professionals, arrived in the region Thursday and will stay until later today.

Russ Kane, a Houston-based wine writer who writes for the [VintageTexas.com](#) Web site,

Jobs

HOSPICE OF THE SANDIAS Are you interested in joining a dynamic, new office that you can grow with?... [»](#)

Experienced Legal Assistant needed for large law firm to do litigation and collections work including... [»](#)

B.O.F. Services, Ltd. Now accepting applications for truck drivers. Class A CDL Required. EXCELLENT... [»](#)

Wanted EXPERIENCED store manager for a local area feed store. Fax resume with expected monthly... [»](#)

TRUCK MECHANIC Regional Truck Leasing Co. In Need Of Heavy Duty Truck Mechanic. Competitive Pay... [»](#)

[SEE ALL TOPJOBS](#)

Autos

Real Estate

[MORE LUBBOCK CLASSIFIEDS](#)

Search for jobs with **YAHOO! hotjobs**

HOTFACTS
by YAHOO! hotjobs



2 in 3

workers expect no promotion this year.

Source: Yahoo! HotJobs site poll, February 2008

Advance your career at **LubbockOnline.com**

said he is very impressed with the quality of wine being produced from grapes grown around Lubbock.

"It's the best in the state," Kane said.

Growing grapes on the High Plains has its advantages.

There are few trees, which means less danger from marauding birds. Low humidity also helps prevent pests from taking hold of the grape plants.

And aside from the hail, wind and unpredictable freezes - temperatures on the High Plains work pretty good for growing wine grapes.

The cool nights and warm days are an ideal climate for wine grapes. The region's strong sunlight produces a darker grape, which is valued in the creation of many wines.

And there's another reason growing wine grapes on the High Plains makes sense.

Wine grapes require less water than row crops such as cotton or peanuts. And that's a big deal because the aquifer beneath the farmland is becoming more depleted every year.

West Texas wine grape growing also has its challenges.

Late-season freezes can destroy tender plants in April, and tennis ball-size hail can destroy a crop in a day anytime from late spring through summer.

But unpredictable weather has its advantages, too.

"If we didn't have these winds and hailstorms, Californians would be flocking to this part of the country," Reddy said.

To comment on this story:

henri.brickey@lubbockonline.com 766-8754

Get More: South Plains | farmers | cotton | wine grapes

Reader Comments

Posted by: [RuthCalabria](#) at Sep. 6, 2008 at 1:34:57 pm

Log on to www.matrix-evolutions.com for a story about Third Reich Lubbock and my brother, Don Graf, a wine grower here in Lubbock for many years.

Ruth Calabria
matrix-evolutions

Posted by: [fredsun1](#) at Sep. 6, 2008 at 2:27:47 pm

"Third Reich Lubbock"? Say what?

Lubbock isn't like Hitler's Germany in any way.

And I say that as a liberal Democrat.

Hyperbole is such a drag in political discourse.

Posted by: [RuthCalabria](#) at Sep. 6, 2008 at 6:48:26 pm

fredsun1, did you log on to our website, www.matrix-evolutions.com ?

Ruth Calabria

Posted by: [wingswest](#) at Sep. 6, 2008 at 9:24:10 pm

I did Ruth and all i can say is yall are long winded. I know you dont like your brother but calling him a jerk in writing like Pete did and then posting that letter on the net along with the other allegations you make may cost you approx 14k in legal fees. Heres the math, 30K-16K future dental wk = 14K - brothers 7k and your lawyers 7k legal fees = 0. Several in my family have gone to Juarez for dental work for less than 1/2 the cost here. Im not sure they will ever go there again because of the war zone it has become. Over 900 have been killed there this yr and the yr isnt OUT! Alot more heads have been cut off by narco terrorist in Mexico than al Qaeda has ever cut off. I can see how one would become jaded living in a country as corrupt as Mexico.

You can comment by [logging in](#).

Sponsored Links

[grape supplement](#)
www.Revatrol.com


[Inn- The Grape Leaf Inn](#)
www.grapeleafinn.com

Ads by Yahoo!

CONTACT US

806-762-8844

Your Name

Webmaster 

[Need More Help?](#)

This site, and all its content © 2008 The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal | The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal
[Terms of Service](#) | [Email Addresses](#) | [Need Help with LubbockOnline](#)
[Advertise with Us](#) | [Local Business Listings](#)