



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION

MUSCADINE WREATHS

for the
Farmer Florist

Muscadines are native to Mississippi and grow wild throughout the state. Naturally adaptable, resistant to insects and disease, and boasting long vine life, muscadines are a great addition for farmer florist production systems.

PRODUCTION

Muscadines thrive in fertile, well-drained, sandy-loam soils. Good aeration and slightly acidic soil will promote healthy muscadine vines. Muscadines are well-adapted to the relatively warm winters of the South and can withstand the high levels of precipitation common in the region. However, in times of drought, consistent irrigation is necessary. Drip irrigation is recommended for supplemental moisture.

Muscadines are grown on trellises. For small production areas, a simple, single horizontal wire attached at 5½ feet above the ground to posts spaced 15–20 feet apart is sufficient. Muscadines may be planted from November

through February. Space plants 20 feet apart to allow the main arms to grow 7½–10 feet horizontally in each direction.

Recommended spacing between rows is at least 12 feet.

Begin training the vines when the shoots are approximately 1 foot long. Choose the strongest shoot and remove the rest. Tie the shoot to a stake to ensure the vine grows upright toward the horizontal wire. When the shoot reaches the wire (usually within one season), pinch out the terminal, which will force two to three lateral buds.

Select the two strongest laterals and tie them loosely to the wire, one on each side of the main shoot.

While regular pruning encourages fruit production, it is not necessary for vine production. If vines are not pruned annually, fruit production is poor.

Muscadines require fertilization on an annual basis. Apply ½ pound (1 cup) 8-8-8 fertilizer per plant in early spring of the first growing season, about 6 weeks after planting. Broadcast the fertilizer in a 2-foot band around the base of the plant, making sure to keep it at least 6 inches away from the trunk. Side-dress with ⅛ pound of ammonium nitrate per vine 6 weeks after the last application, in late May and early July of the first growing season. Fertilizing three times per year after the first year helps maintain vine vigor and health.

Annual soil testing is recommended to ensure proper nutrition in the vineyard.

Muscadines are naturally resistant to most insect and disease issues. However, application of pesticides may occasionally be necessary. When employing chemical measures, it is the user's responsibility to follow label instructions. Herbicide labels can be obtained from www.cdms.net and www.greenbook.net. You should review labels before purchasing a product. Some labels provide scientific names and common names of plants, some list common names, and some provide a combination. Registration of chemicals and their approved uses changes periodically.

HARVEST AND HANDLING

While fruit may be harvested in late summer, vines should be harvested beginning in late fall. Cut long lengths of vine to work with (at least 3 feet). Remove all leaves unless the dried leaves will enhance your final design. Curly tendrils may be left intact to provide visual interest. Many muscadine growers harvest vines only to compost or burn them. It may be best for wreath producers to partner with muscadine growers to remove pruned vines, then make them into wreaths. This can be done on the farm, or vines can be hauled to a wreathmaking facility.

CULTIVAR RECOMMENDATIONS

Any muscadine vine is suitable for farmer florists. However, if you are also interested in fruit production, consider the following:

Black Beauty Purple, crunchy skin; large size; excellent flavor; female; good yields; extended harvest; excellent vigor; excellent for fresh fruit.

Carlos Bronze; tough skin; medium size; good flavor; self-fertile; excellent for juice, jelly, and wine; high yields.

Ison Purple; medium to large size; strong muscadine flavor; medium-tough skin; self-fertile; uniform ripening; good pollinizer; good yields; good for fresh fruit.

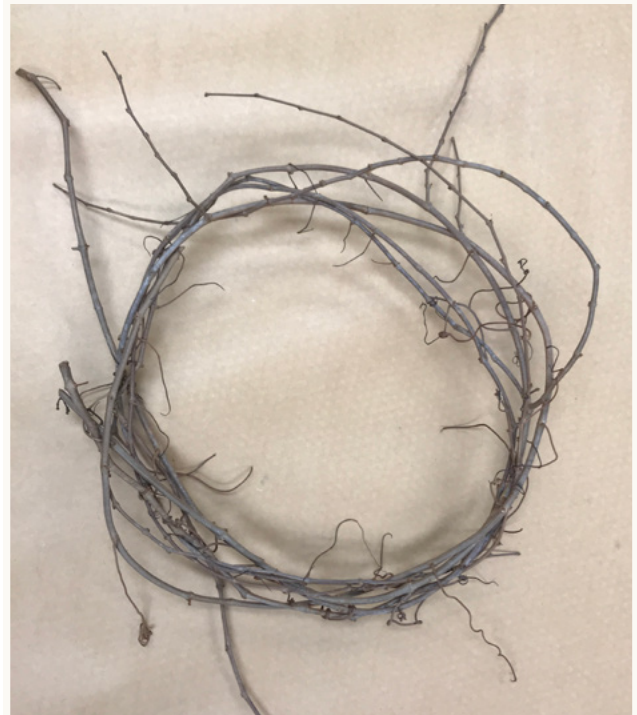
Noble Small; purple; good flavor; tough skin; self-fertile; excellent for juice, wine, and jelly.

Southern Home Small, reddish berries; thin skins; more neutral flavor; seeded; good for fresh fruit, juice, wine; self-fertile; attractive ornamental leaves.

Note: Muscadines have vines that produce imperfect flowers (only female flower parts) and vines that produce perfect flowers (male and female flower parts). One perfect-flowered vine can pollinate eight surrounding imperfect-flowered vines. In a single-row planting, every third vine should be a pollinizer.

DESIGN APPLICATIONS

Creating a muscadine wreath is quite simple, requiring only the vines themselves, some time, and patience. The following simple method can help you to get started.



Begin by weaving a long length of grapevine into a circular shape.



Repeat, creating three to five of these circles.



Stack the circles on top of each other, then spiral another grapevine length or two around the stack to hold them in place. Use several of these spiraling vines to establish a semi-rigid wreath.



The completed wreath does not need to be a perfect, clean circle. Indeed, it may display renegade stems and a slightly asymmetrical shape. These give the wreath character, are perfect for adding flowers and trims, and are a gentle reminder of the Mississippi countryside.



Some producers may want to sell decorated wreaths. A simple method is to attach a tied cluster of permanent botanical (silk) flowers to a wreath. Materials include plastic cable ties, coral gerbera daisies, white/peach tulips, dogwood, and peach ribbon. You will need wire cutters and ribbon shears for this project.



Gather all the flowers together. Nestle larger flowers toward the center of the bouquet and keep the dogwood branches long. They will follow the curve of the wreath. Bind the stems tightly with a single cable tie. Note that you can spiral one or two very long stems to appear like grapevines, but keep this to just a few; otherwise, it calls too much attention to the frantic-appearing silk flower stems.



Attach the flower bunch to the wreath with a second cable tie. Include several grapevine stems in the attachment to ensure the design is secure.



Tie a length of ribbon around the entire attachment of stems. Create a knot just above the cable tie's buckle. This will help keep the ribbon in place without much slipping.



Tie the ribbon into a simple, shoestring bow.



Gently bend the wire-stemmed silk flowers into place. Allow flowers at the focal area to look toward the viewer while all others radiate outward toward the top and bottom of the design.



Add a cable tie to the rear top of the design to act as a hanger. Do not tighten it too much, and leave enough loop space for it to hang.



Display the wreath as a sample of what your creative customers can do. Do not forget to add a price tag to the design. You may find that it is necessary to make more of these samples because many customers would rather purchase a finished product.

REFERENCE

Stafne, E. (2018). *Fruit and nut review: Muscadines*. (P3806). Mississippi State University Extension.



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