

CULTIVAR PROFILE

Itasca (ai-TA-skuh)

BY C. Oliver, and H. Caspari, 7/2025

DRAFT

Frontenac Gris X MN1234
University of MN Release Interspecific Cross

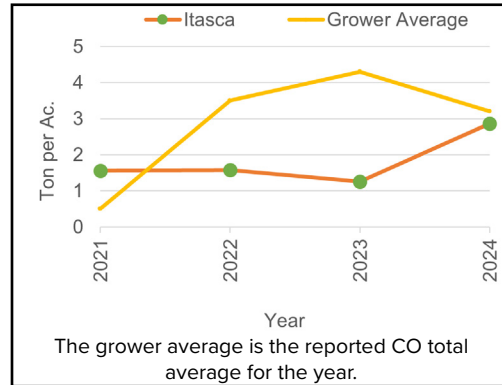
Commercially released 2017 by University of Minnesota Grape Breeding program, MN, USA

Descriptor

Itasca is one of the newest releases to have come from the UMN grape breeding program. Named after Lake Itasca, most industries are still trying to get a handle on this variety. Vines are moderately vigorous with a more upright growth habit². The clusters are small to medium-sized, with small to medium-sized berries and leaves with five deep lobes and mild sawtoothing.

Growing Practices

In our experience Itasca has a more downward growing habit and should be grown on a high-wire system. In CSU trials vines trained to vertical shoot positioning have had very low vigor and lower yields compared to vines on a high-wire system. It has been reported that this variety will produce shoots from all three buds at once, which requires in-season shoot thinning. This has not been observed in our trials. Shoots commonly have two clusters. Trials



showed Itasca has strong resistance to powdery mildew and can have a very limited spray program. Rootstocks are not required even in phylloxera infested soils.

Concerns

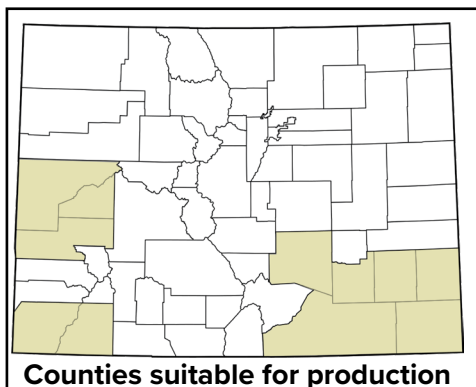
Itasca is so new, there is little information about diseases or pests. It appears to be more resistant to phylloxera and powdery mildew than *Vitis vinifera* varieties at this time.

Colorado Research

Itasca has been tested in two different CSU test plots, the Orchard Mesa station and in an off-site, grower/collaborator location since 2016 at Orchard Mesa. The vines have weathered two extreme frost events, with >95% of vines surviving since planting in 2016. Our tests indicate that Itasca buds acclimate early in fall making it one of the least susceptible varieties to extreme fall frosts.

References

- 1 Teh, S. 2024. Cold Hardy Wine Grapes - Itasca
- 2 Clark, M., et al 2017. HortScience, 52(4): 649-651



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Grand Valley Growth Profile¹

- Very early budbreak
- Very early season ripening
- Aug 1st harvest
- 1.5 ton/ac average yield
- Medium cluster size

Cold Hardiness

- -21 to -29 °F

Flavors

- Pear, quince, and honeydew
- Butterscotch

Juice Metrics

- 23.9 Brix
- 10.3 q/l titratable acidity
- 3.4 pH



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