

NTH Home & Garden

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Muscadines are still a Southern staple

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Many people who grew up in the South have memories of muscadines, whether they ate them off the vine in their backyard or remember their grandmother making jelly with the Southern fruit.

While muscadines may seem old-fashioned, they still have strong roots in the South.

Janet Ison, one of the owners of Ison's Nursery and Vineyards, said her grandfather started growing in the early 1930s. Although he grew a variety of plants, Ison said muscadines were one of his favorites.

"So many people are used to eating muscadines, they bring back so many memories," Ison said. "Growing them really represents the South. It's a Southern tradition."

Ison said it is almost muscadine season. Their season runs from around the middle of August to the second week of November.

Muscadines are a variety of grape. The difference between table grapes and muscadines is that muscadines have thicker skin, are rounder, sweeter and they can be much larger, according to Ison.

Because the skin on muscadines is thicker than table grapes, they carry more nutrients, according to Livestrong.com.

Ison said muscadines are grown mostly throughout the Southeast because they thrive in a warmer climate.

There are many different varieties. Scuppernongs are a bronze variety of muscadines, according to Ison.

Muscadines can be used to make many products, including ciders, jellies and juices.

"People come and see us and say they remember eating them as a kid or their mom making jelly



COURTESY OF DARLENE EVANS

Janet Ison, Darlene Evans and Greg Ison run the family business their grandfather started in the 1930s.

from them," Ison said.

Many people make their own wine, she said.

Ison said muscadines are easy to grow at home. They don't require much maintenance. Pruning them doesn't require much effort, and they are pretty disease resistant.

Ison said the best time to purchase muscadine plants is in the late fall/winter, when the plants are dormant.

She said the plants do require a single-wire trellis, but one plant can last up to 20 years.

Coweta resident Sara Moore grows muscadines in her backyard. She said muscadines have always been a part of her family.

Now, she and her mom enjoy making homemade jelly with

muscadines together.

She has a muscadine vine, and her mother, Brenda Kelley, referred to as "MaMa Kelley," grows grapes in her backyard.

Kelley takes her grapes and Moore's muscadines to combine them into what she calls "Muscagrape" jelly.

Moore said people love her mother's jelly because it tastes homemade. She added that they don't use any pesticides, so the fruit is organic.

Kelley started by making jelly and giving it away as gifts, and now she enjoys selling it at festivals.

Moore said she and her mom like being able to spend time together making and selling their jelly at festivals.



COURTESY OF DARLENE EVANS

Muscadines are a variety of grape that grow primarily in the Southeast.

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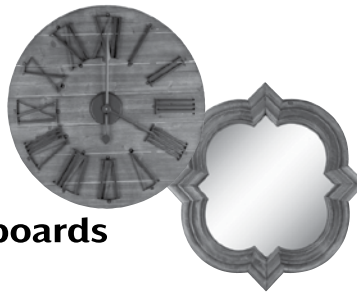


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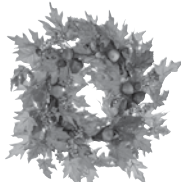
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