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Grape Variety Profile:

Blanc Du Bois

Justin Scheiner and Fran Pontasch*

Blanc Du Bois is a hybrid white wine grape cultivar that is widely grown along the Texas Gulf Coast, due to its tolerance to Pierce's Disease (PD), and its wine quality potential. Developed by the University of Florida and released in 1987, Blanc Du Bois has become the leading PD tolerant white wine grape cultivar in Texas. This variety is made into a wide range of wine styles including sparkling, still table, and fortified wines.

Many Blanc Du Bois vineyards in Texas use the Watson Training System (high-wire bilateral cordon with a horizontally divided canopy) due to Blanc Du Bois' high vigor and intermediate growth habit (neither strongly upright nor procumbent or downward) (Fig. 1). Blanc Du Bois has medium-sized leaves (Fig. 2) that enable higher shoot densities than the Black Spanish variety, and the divided canopy of the Watson System facilitates additional shoot numbers (Fig. 3). The Watson System is best suited for smaller, hand-harvested vineyards. Mechanical harvesting is very limited by the Watson System's hardware and architecture.



Figure 1. Diagram of Watson Training System.



*Extension Viticulture Specialists, The Texas A&M University System

Figure 2. Blanc Du Bois leaf



Figure 3. View from underneath Watson Training System.

Blanc Du Bois produces medium sized clusters with large berries (Fig. 4). Variable fruit set has been observed as a problem in some locations and growing seasons in Texas. However, when fruit set is high, Blanc Du Bois can have compact clusters that may lead to a higher incidence of fruit rots. Cluster weights can vary from 0.15 to 0.5 pounds per cluster.

Blanc Du Bois is resistant to powdery mildew and PD but is highly susceptible to anthracnose (Fig. 5). Other fungal diseases that also require control include downy mildew (Fig. 6), black rot, phomopsis cane, leaf spot, grapevine trunk diseases, and bunch rots (Fig. 7). Commercially grown Blanc Du Bois requires a wellplanned fungal disease control program. Many growers opt for a dormant lime sulfur application to help control anthracnose. The major insect pest of Blanc Du Bois is the grape berry moth, although other insects can be occasional pests.

The majority of Blanc Du Bois in Texas is grown un-grafted or on its own roots. However, research at Texas A&M University indicates that Blanc Du Bois performance in alkaline soils improves when vines are grafted onto an alkaline soil tolerant rootstock such as 1103P or 5C.



Figure 5. Anthracnose in Blanc Du Bois.



Figure 6. Downy mildew leaf infection in Blanc Du Bois.



Figure 4. Tight Blanc Du Bois clusters.



Figure 7. Bunch rot (ripe rot and sour rot) in Blanc Du Bois.

Own-rooted Blanc Du Bois vines are prone to micronutrient deficiency (Fig. 8) under alkaline soil conditions resulting in higher production costs because of increased fertilizer inputs. Grafted Blanc Du Bois plant material is available from several grapevine nurseries in limited quantities.

With good viticulture practices, Blanc Du Bois yields typically range from 2 to 5 tons per acre. On average, Blanc Du Bois requires 110 to 125 days from bud break to maturity, making it a short-season grape cultivar. At full maturity, Blanc Du Bois often does not accumulate high



Figure 8. Iron deficiency in Blanc Du Bois resulting in leaf chlorosis.

soluble solids compared to *V. vinifera*. It is prone to losing grapes from the vine (shelling) when allowed to hang for extended periods.

After crush, Blanc Du Bois juice rapidly oxidizes, giving it a brown, murky appearance that lightens during fermentation (Fig. 9). Blanc Du Bois fruit and wine have a distinct floral-fruity flavor similar to others in the Muscat family.



Figure 9. Blanc Du Bois juice immediately after pressing (left), 30 minutes after pressing (center), and 1 hour after pressing (right).

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