



Grape Variety Profile:

Victoria Red

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Victoria Red is a Pierce's Disease (PD) tolerant table grape cultivar. It was bred by the University of Arkansas in 1971 and released in 2012. The aim of the breeding program was not to develop PD tolerant grapes. After a decade of observation and testing in an area of Texas where PD is very common, Victoria Red was proven tolerant to the disease. It became the first true table grape with PD tolerance.

Victoria Red has an upright growth habit that lends itself to vertical training systems. In Texas, the most common system used for Victoria Red is a mid-wire cordon system with vertical shoot positioning (VSP) (Fig. 1). This variety's fruitfulness on the lower, more basal buds of its canes allows for spur pruning. The vigor of Victoria Red is moderate, but vines can become excessively vigorous if over-fertilized.

The leaves of Victoria Red are medium-sized allowing for high shoot densities, which should be avoided to prevent over-cropping (Fig. 2). Over-cropping prevents air flow through the canopy, a necessary factor to decrease humidity and drying time after a rain or dew. Low humidity and a short drying time may reduce the incidence of fungal diseases.

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Figure 1. Cordon spur pruned Victoria Red grapevine.



Figure 2. Open canopy with exposed clusters.

Although Victoria Red is tolerant of PD, it is susceptible to several fungal diseases including powdery mildew (Fig. 3), black rot, phomopsis cane, and leaf spot, anthracnose, and downy mildew. Commercially grown, Victoria Red requires a well-planned fungal disease control program. Losses from these diseases may be acceptable to homeowners if they choose not to spray fungicides.

The major insect pest of Victoria Red is the grape berry moth (Fig. 4), although other insects can be occasional pests. Like other grapes, birds can be a problem and netting, or other means of protection, may be required.

Winter injury can occur in North Texas when winter temperatures drop below 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Victoria Red should be planted in USDA cold hardiness Zone 7b and warmer.

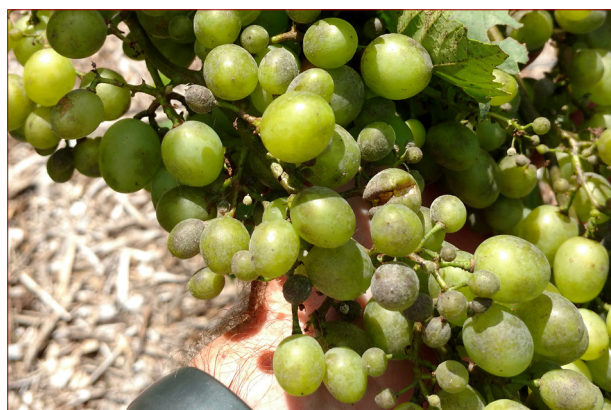


Figure 3. Powdery mildew on Victoria Red clusters causing berries to split.



Figure 4. Berry with exit hole from a grape berry moth larva.



Figure 5. Long, loose clusters of Victoria Red.

In Texas, Victoria Red is most frequently grown un-grafted or on its own roots. However, observations at Texas A&M University suggest that grafting can increase vigor and may provide a more favorable nutritional status in alkaline soils. Iron deficiency can occur in highly alkaline soil.

A healthy, well-pruned Victoria Red vine can yield as much as 30 pounds of fruit or more due to its large cluster size (Fig. 5). However, an excessive crop can reduce fruit quality and overall vine health. Fruit should be removed from shoots that are shorter than 18 inches soon after flowering to maximize fruit quality.

With a typical vine spacing of 8 to 10 feet and proper pruning, cluster weights often average around 1 pound (Fig. 6). Clusters have



Figure 6. A large crop of Victoria Red grapes.

a naturally loose architecture. The berries of Victoria Red are very large, comparable to table grapes found in a grocery store (Fig. 7). Victoria Red berries have a thin skin, crunchy texture, and a pleasant, fruity flavor. Victoria Red berries typically contain from 1 to 3 seeds. Its seeds are palatable but may limit marketability.

The skin of Victoria Red grapes ranges from light pink to bright red at maturity. The coloration appears to be affected by the cluster's exposure to sunlight. More exposed fruit typi-



Figure 7. Average sized clusters of Victoria Red grapes. Berry size slightly larger than a quarter.

cally has a more consistent color but exposure to the hot afternoon sun should be minimized to prevent sunburn (Fig. 8). Use canopy management practices such as leaf removal and shoot thinning to improve cluster exposure.

As the fruit of Victoria Red ripens, it becomes increasingly sweet and less tart in flavor. Fruit is often harvested from 18 to 25 percent soluble solids (°Brix) based on taste preference. For the backyard grower, this means that fruit may be picked over a several week period. Although Victoria Red is a table grape, it has been used to make a simple, fruity-flavored white wine.



Figure 8. Sunburned berries after excessive exposure to afternoon sun.

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