

vineyards. In 1867, Jarvis Van Buren, a well-known horticulturist, stated, "Let us make the state of Georgia one grand vineyard such as the world has never yet seen." He believed that a wine industry would be an ideal substitute for cotton.

The Cultivator also reported, "scuppernon fever seems to be increasing." Although "fever" may have been an exaggeration, by 1880, vineyards were springing up around Columbus, Macon, Griffin, Thomasville, and Augusta.

In the late 1800's, the Tift brothers of Tifton began grape culture and wine production. Their vineyard contained over 40,000 vines. By the end of the century, grapes were being cultivated throughout the state.

Over the years, Georgia has been

a leader in the development of new and improved muscadine varieties. Researchers at Georgia Experiment Stations have successfully developed larger muscadine varieties which have more eye appeal to the consumer.

Georgia's muscadine industry has rapidly increased during the past few years. This is due in part to the early retirement of many urban and rural individuals searching for ways to enhance their income in later years.

Presently, there are approximately 1000 acres of muscadine grapes scattered across Georgia, according to Owens. Most of these vineyards tend to be small, five to ten acre, vineyards. The bulk of muscadines grown in the state are utilized as table fruit and often marketed in "pick your own" vineyards.

The Georgia Muscadine Growers Association was established around 1975 for the purpose of promoting, establishing standards of quality, and locating viable markets for the fruit.

"It is difficult to promote a fruit that many people remember going into the woods and picking," explained Owens.

