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## TEXAS: Early grape varieties not suited to area

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Northern California, the high plains region of Texas has remarkably similar weather with hot, dry days and cool nights.

"Cotton is what got me here. I like to grow cotton," said Wilmeth, who still grows cotton in addition to rye, watermelons and peanuts. "The reason I started grapes—when others say I'm stupid for growing grapes—I don't like being tied to a farm bill that I can't rely on."

West Texas isn't the only place where grape growing is booming. Viticulture, as the cultivation of wine grapes is known, is flourishing in such unlikely locales as South Dakota, New Jersey and North Carolina, where farmers are tearing up tobacco fields and planting grapevines in their place. Southern Illinois is the hub of a nascent Illinois wine industry.

Karen Ross, executive director of the Wine Grape Growers of America, said wine grapes are now being grown in about 40 states. California continues to dominate, producing more than 90 percent of all U.S. wine.

### Romance of winemaking

The growth in viticulture in non-traditional areas is fueled by struggling farmers looking for ways to supplement their incomes and by hobby farmers dabbling in the wine trade. Besides the romanticism of making wine, Ross said a successful wine grape crop typically generates more money per acre than traditional crops.

While the amount of acreage devoted to wine grapes might not look significant, Ross said, "if you take a state like Nebraska, if you start from zero and go to 1,100 acres, that's huge."

U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics show that after California, the biggest grape-producing states are Washington, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Oregon, though



AP photo by Robin O'Shaughnessy

Grapes for Merlot wine grow behind a sign announcing the Newsom Vineyards along Route 214 north of Plains, Texas.



Sources: ESRI, TeleAtlas

Chicago Tribune

the USDA records don't distinguish between wine grapes and table grapes.

The plains around Lubbock are the largest cotton-growing area in the nation. But cotton farmers are nervous that the federal government's subsidy program may be curtailed or eliminated altogether.

Larry Young, a rancher in Brownfield who grows 1,200 acres of cotton, said he wouldn't make a penny on cotton without

the subsidies. As a result, he said, he eventually hopes to get out of the cotton business and expand his 25 acres of wine grapes to 40 acres.

While grapevines are more labor-intensive than cotton, Young said the payoff is much greater with less risk. He said he spends about \$350,000 on his cotton, for everything from seed to herbicides, while he only spends \$35,000 on his grapes. Grapes return roughly \$5,000 in

profits an acre while cotton brings in \$100 to \$150 an acre even with the subsidies, he said.

"We were just looking for something different," said his father, Bobby Young, who planted his first vineyard in 1992 and had "no idea what we were doing. ... I couldn't even pronounce the varieties."

These days, Bobby Young has no problems wrapping his mouth around names like Viognier and Sangiovese, and he was quick to point out a vine full of plump Gewurztraminer grapes in a neighbor's vineyard.

"You ever had that with pecan pie?" he asked. "I could have died and gone to heaven."

Like the oil industry, viticulture has gone through boom-and-bust cycles in Texas. Wine was produced around Dallas and El Paso as far back as 1850, but a flood in 1897 wiped out many of the vineyards in El Paso, and Prohibition took care of the rest about two decades later.

The first vineyards in Lubbock were planted in the early 1970s, but many of the early wine entrepreneurs planted va-

rieties not suited for West Texas' climate or they planted more acres than they could manage. Besides, the wine "was awful, gag-o-matic," said Bobby Cox, a one-time grain farmer from Amarillo who planted his first grapevine in 1974.

### Wineries rebound

The Texas wine industry took another hit in the mid-1990s because of bad weather and poor management at several wineries. The industry today—which includes vineyards in the Hill Country near Austin and a few more near El Paso—is more stable because the wineries are on better financial footing and the growers are more sophisticated, Cox said.

But problems persist. Texans simply don't drink much wine, ranking 35th in the nation in per capita wine consumption, a fact that isn't helped by the abundance of dry counties in Texas. The heart of the West Texas grape-growing region, around Brownfield, is about an hour from the nearest store that sells wine, in a small "wet" strip of

stores in Lubbock; in fact, most of the grapes grown in West Texas are shipped to wineries in the Hill Country or near Dallas that cater to tourists and yuppies.

Meanwhile, some cotton farmers continue to use a pesticide called 2, 4-D that is cheap and effective at killing weeds. But if it drifts onto a vineyard it decimates the vines. Cotton farmers have been asked to switch to other pesticides or spray when the wind is low, but some have refused to cooperate. "That's our biggest threat," said Larry Young, who persuaded a neighbor to use a more expensive pesticide by agreeing to pay the difference.

The West Texas grape growers have planted all sorts of different grapes, though Muscat, Gewurztraminer and Cabernet Sauvignon appear to be the most popular varieties. Wilmeth caused a stir among several local winegrowers by planting 4 acres of Zinfandel grapes, a variety that others have tried without success.

"It's kind of like going to NASCAR to see a wreck," said Bobby Young, eyeing the Zinfandel vines. "We're all waiting to see it happen."

For all the uncertainty and obstacles, however, the grape growers of West Texas found time one recent evening to taste their wares at Neal Newsom's ranch outside of Plains, a scene that would have been unthinkable a decade ago. A cotton farmer who planted his first 3 acres of grapevines in 1986, Newsom now has 75 acres and his vineyard is becoming so well-known in Texas that he is occasionally stopped for an autograph in wine stores.

He still has 200 acres of cotton, but he said this year could be his last cotton crop.

"One of the things that intrigued me about grapes was it wasn't a government program like corn and cotton," he said.

The ranchers oohed and ahhed when Newsom brought out a brochure that featured a \$150,000 grape harvester he had recently purchased. But among West Texas grape growers these days, it's wine that draws the most lavish praise.

"It's amazing," said Larry Young, describing West Texas Muscat Canelli. "It just explodes in your mouth." [ajmartin@tribune.com](mailto:ajmartin@tribune.com)



Tribune photo by E. Jason Wambsgans

Cathy Barnett visits the Near North Side barbershop where her son, Dehombre Barnett, the owner, was fatally shot Friday night.

## VIOLENCE: Slayings were scattered across city

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for violence. None of the killings happened in those areas, however, demonstrating the unpredictability of deadly outbursts and the limitations of law enforcement's ability to stop trouble before it happens.

"You're still going to have these spontaneous, sporadic instances of violence," said Tio Hardiman, director of gang mediation services for the anti-violence group CeaseFire. "What happened over the weekend was just a bad weekend."

Some believe the geographic diversity of the crimes and the differing nature of the motives may foreshadow a limit to how much further crime can be reduced using street-level intelligence, street-corner cameras and crime data tracking.

"The police's full-court press through all of last year was focused on gangs and guns. They appear to have had a lot of success on that," said Wesley Skogan, a professor at Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research. "Now that they've had that success, the remaining homicides are a mixed bag—different problems, different situations, different areas."

Simply put, Skogan said, there's a level of predictability to gang violence. Once police gain control of that, a baseline amount of violence is still likely to occur, and to be largely un-

predictable.

Along with the 10 killed over the weekend, another three men died of wounds suffered in previous violent incidents, making this one of the deadliest stretches of days since the city launched its new crime-fighting initiative in 2003.

"In spite of our progress, a weekend like this past one is a reminder to us that there's still a lot of work to be done in a lot of neighborhoods to eliminate gangs, guns and drugs," said police spokesman David Bayless.

Many experts agree there's a limit to what the police should be expected to do in terms of preventing violent acts.

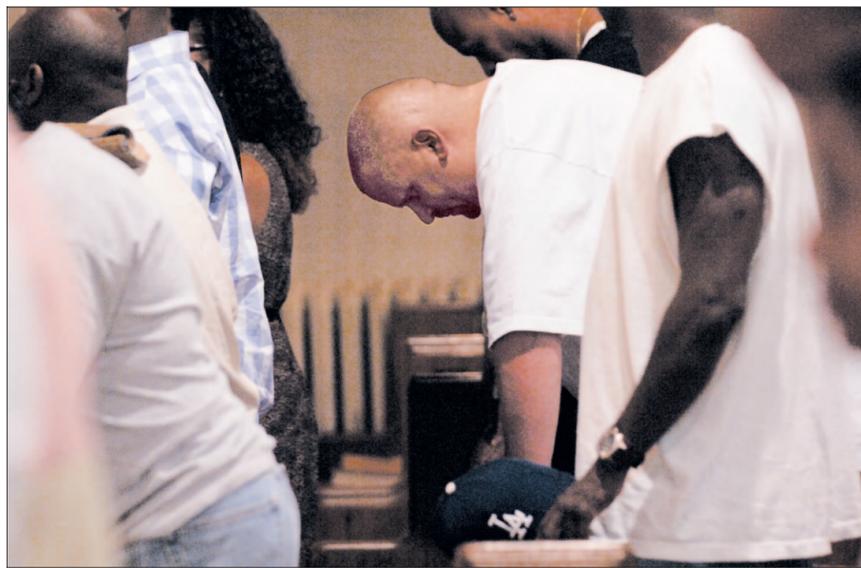
"You have to find other solutions," Skogan said. "The police invariably are going to be reactive. You need to do things that are proactive."

That, he said, is where groups like CeaseFire come in—organizations that work at a grassroots level to address violence in ways police cannot.

"You can put all the suppression in the world you want on an area, but if people want to kill someone, they're going to kill someone," said Hardiman. "If people don't change the way they think about violence, see it as an abnormal act, people are always going to think that violence is the first thing they can reach for."

Bayless said police are already examining the weekend's slayings to see if any are harbingers of disputes or retaliation attempts. If so, he said, resources will go toward preventing further violence.

The first slaying happened Friday night when, according to prosecutors, Brian Walker, 20, entered Prototype Barber & Salon on North Clybourn Avenue. The shop was owned by Dehombre Barnett, 24, who grew



Tribune photo by Candice C. Cusic

Charles Fernandes prays Monday at St. Dorothy Catholic Church, near where three men were fatally shot early Monday in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood.

### Weekend's rash of homicides widespread

Though police have greatly reduced gang-related killings, a violent outburst such as this weekend's, which was spread across the city and stemmed from a wide range of motives, is difficult to stop, experts say.



VICTIM, AGE	DAY, TIME	WHAT HAPPENED
1 Dehombre Barnett, 24	Friday, 8:25 p.m.	Shot in head at a barbershop.
2 Sergio Hernandez, 19	Friday, 11:25 p.m.	Shot in head in parked car.
3 Ernest Swift	Friday, 11:25 p.m.	Shot multiple times.
4 Tombol Malik, 23	Saturday, 3:45 a.m.	Beaten with his bike lock.
5 Joel Ibarra, 23	Sunday, 12:30 a.m.	Struck by gunfire while driving.
6 Antonio Clay, 21	Sunday, 3:40 a.m.	Stabbed during domestic dispute.
7 John Crowder, 42	Sunday, 4:13 a.m.	Shot in head in his home.
8 John Montgomery, 31	Monday, 2 a.m.	Three victims shot while standing outside.
9 Darryl Dentley, 36		
10 Jemez Nunley, 29		

Note: Times are approximate.

Sources: Chicago Police Department, ESRI Chicago Tribune

up in the nearby Cabrini-Green public housing complex.

Walker left the store and returned, each time having an exchange with Barnett over the cost of a haircut, prosecutors said. In a bond hearing Monday, it was alleged that Walker returned to the store a third time, possibly to rob it, and shot Barnett in the left temple.

Balloons, flowers and a half-dozen teddy bears covered the crime scene Monday morning as customers stopped to pay respects. They recalled a driven young man, an excellent barber, a person who would easily walk away from an argument.

"A lot of places have gang-bangers hanging out, but that wasn't the kind of place he ran,"

said Rachael Watson, 29, who brought her 6-year-old son to Barnett for cuts. "He kept his shop clean. There was no hanging around in there."

Barnett's death was followed by two more slayings Friday night, one Saturday, three Sunday, and then Monday morning's triple homicide. Police say some had motives, like a gang

retaliation, while others were the result of arguments that went too far.

By late Monday, authorities had no motive and no suspects in the early morning triple homicide, which happened in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood.

Family members spent the day mourning the three men who were killed—John Montgomery, 31, Darryl Dentley, 36, and Jemez Nunley, 29—and residents wondered if their streets are still safe.

The three were shot at 78th Street and Vernon Avenue next to St. Dorothy Catholic Church. A neighbor whose window looks out over where two of the bodies were found said she heard gunshots at about 2 a.m.

"It shook my window and woke me up out of bed," Chundra Ross said. "I dropped to the floor. My husband said, 'Stay down.'"

When she looked out her window, she saw a man on the ground. She later learned the man was a close friend, Dentley.

"We celebrate our birthdays together every year," she said. "... I just want everyone to know Darryl was a good person."

Ross said several men hang out on that corner every night talking and drinking beer. When she last looked out Sunday evening, she said the usual crowd was gathered.

"There were a lot of people standing here, and when they started shooting, they just scattered out," Ross said.

Two men were shot in front of Ross' window, and a third was shot in the street in front of St. Dorothy Church. A bullet hit a church windowpane.

As the pane was removed Monday, Deacon Wallace Harris made lemonade and talked to a group of young people who had gathered on a nearby porch.

"We've got a lot of young kids in this neighborhood," he said. "You get suspicious, but not worried. We pride ourselves on having kids around."

At least two of the slain men grew up in the neighborhood. Dentley and Nunley had been arrested on drug charges, according to court records. Montgomery was sentenced to 10 years in 1993 for attempted murder.

"They may act the fool," Ross said, "but they're all somebody's kids. They don't deserve to die."

Tribune staff reporters Jeff Coen and Josh Noel contributed to this report.