

## Virgil grower crowned Line 4 grapegrower receives this year's award for excellence.

By Marc MacDonald, Niagara Advance  
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Grape King winner Debbie Inglis and her husband Rob check out some of the grapes still on the vines. The chardonnay grapes are set to be picked in the next seven to 10 days.

Debbie Inglis already has a few feathers in her hat; she's the director of the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture institute at Brock University, she's an accomplished business woman who is the president of Niagara Vintage Harvesters and now, she can add one more - Grape King.

Crowned by a 54-year tradition that recognizes grape growing excellence, Inglis becomes just the third woman to have the honour bestowed upon her, one she is extremely proud of.

"I'm completely honoured to have been nominated by the grape growers and been awarded this," said Inglis. "I'm looking forward to promoting the grape and wine industry."

Livia Sipos was the most recent female winner when she won the title in 2004 and the first female winner was Donna Lailey in 1991 - the woman who set the goal for Inglis.

"Ever since Donna Lailey was crowned Grape King I have wanted to follow in her footsteps," said Inglis.

"This is the highlight of my grape-growing career."

A second generation grape grower, Inglis has always been around vineyards, with her parents purchasing their first in 1970.

She remembers where it all began, with an eight-year-old version of herself working with her parents.

"The first job I can remember was quite exciting for an eight-year-old. [It was] figuring out a way to drag grape stumps that were about my height down the vineyard row to the stump pile ... over the years we all had our jobs on the farms and that led to my life-long love of being in the vineyards; my sanctuary."

This year, grape growers across the region are enjoying one of their best ever harvests, applauding the weather Mother Nature has given them.

"For 35 years I've been in this industry and I can't remember a harvest like we've had this year," Inglis said.

"Our growing seasons are so different each and every year."

A team effort with her husband Rob, Inglis continues to carry on the proud family tradition and is enjoying the opportunity to see the fruits of her labour.