

## **BROCK UNIVERSITY MEDIA RELEASE**

R00093

Nov. 22, 2012

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### **VineAlert launches for 2012-2013 winter**

As the buds for next year's grapes are already on vines across Ontario, protecting the crop starts now. That's why Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) has launched VineAlert - its annual cold hardiness monitoring program.

Over the dormant season from October to April, a grape bud's ability to survive cold temperatures varies. VineAlert indicates at what temperature different varieties would see damage if a cold weather event occurred. This helps growers know when wind machines or other freeze avoidance methods are warranted to protect buds and vines from winter injury.

"There are a lot of situations in the past where you would have had to use guesswork," says Jim Willwerth, CCOVI's staff viticulturist. "VineAlert communicates important information to the grower community about when it necessary to take preventative action."

The program collects samples and monitors hardiness at 13 sites across the Niagara Peninsula, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County. Growers can specify their location and receive alerts when temperatures in their area approach the lowest temperatures grape buds can survive in.

The use for the program's data goes beyond the alert system; it is also creating a comprehensive database of records. The information is being used by researchers to better understand cold hardiness which will help create best practice guidelines for growers.

"Having the database is like having climate records," says Kevin Ker a CCOVI professional affiliate. "We can look at where the extremes are, what generally should happen in an average year and what are the ways that the plants can respond after being subjected to these particular winters."

**For more information on VineAlert or to sign up visit: [ccovi.ca/vine-alert](http://ccovi.ca/vine-alert)**

This initiative is supported by funding through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Developing Innovative Agri-Products initiative and the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation's (MEDI) Ontario Research Fund, which support industry-led research and innovation. This project is a collaboration between AAFC, MEDI, the Grape Growers of Ontario and Brock's CCOVI.

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