

‘Southern Jewel’: A Self-Fertile, Black Muscadine Grape with Fruit Produced on Bunches has been released by UF/IFAS

Dennis J. Gray, Professor

Mid-Florida Research & Education Center

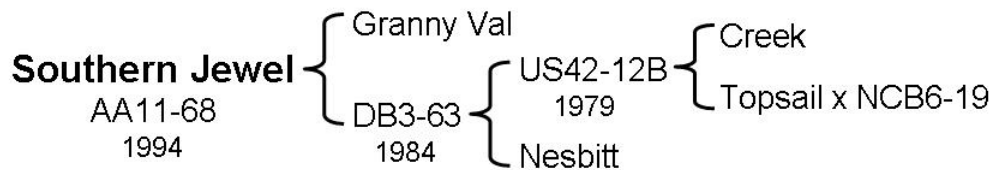
University of Florida/IFAS

‘Southern Jewel’ is a new muscadine grape cultivar being released by the University of Florida that is a high-yielding, disease resistant large black-fruited variety. It has the unique characteristic of producing fruit in bunches of 6 – 12 berries that strongly adhere to the stem. It has excellent taste and a crunchy texture, with a palatable skin, making it well-suited for fresh fruit consumption.



‘Southern Jewel’ Muscadine Grape

‘Southern Jewel’ (numbered selection AA11-68) originated from a cross between ‘Granny Val’, a self-fertile, cultivar with large (9-10 g) bronze berries and DB3-63, a self-fertile, black selection with large (8-9 g) berries. DB3-63 originated from a cross between US42-12B, a black self-fertile selection with small (3-4 g) berries and ‘Nesbitt’, a self-fertile black cultivar with large (9 g) berries. US42-12B originated from a cross between ‘Creek’, a reddish black female cultivar with small (3 g) berries and a hybrid between ‘Topsail’, a female, bronze cultivar with small (3 g) berries and NCB6-19. The origin of NC B6-19 is unclear as it was variously described as a sibling of ‘Topsail’ (‘Latham’ x ‘Burgaw’) or a cross between ‘Latham’ and a seedling from ‘Loomis’ x V19 R7 V2.



Pedigree of ‘Southern Jewel’

Berries are oval in shape, becoming reddish, then dark purple/black upon ripening and 76% have a dry stem scar. Fruit ripening date varies seasonally, but tends to occur in early August at Apopka, approximately 1 to 2 weeks earlier than other muscadine varieties and one week after ‘Delicious’ which is another early-ripening variety. Early ripe fruit have a semi-crunchy flesh and an edible skin that fragments easily with the flesh. Fruit allowed to ripen further tend to have a softer flesh, become noticeably juicier, but retain an edible skin. Fruit yield is greater, berries are larger and ripen more uniformly than ‘Alachua’, which also was selected for even-ripening (Table 1). Berry

texture of ‘Southern Jewel’ is more firm than but size is similar to that of ‘Delicious’ and ‘Nesbitt’, however, the latter ripens unevenly and has poorer stem scar characteristics. ‘Southern Home’, a *Muscadinia* x *Euvitis* hybrid, has higher soluble solids and ripens evenly, but ‘Southern Jewel’ exceeds it in all other characteristics. ‘Supreme’, a cultivar with remarkably large berries and excellent fruit characteristics, did not produce an acceptable yield in this vineyard. It is noteworthy that similar results were obtained with ‘Supreme’ during previous testing at the Central Florida Research and Education Center at Leesburg Florida.

Table 1. Flower type, yield and fruit attributes of ‘Southern Jewel’ compared with five black muscadines grown for fresh fruit consumption.

Cultivar	Flower type ^z	Yield/Vine (kg)	Fruit with dry scar (%)	Berry wt (g)	Soluble solids concn (%)	Type of ripening
Southern Jewel	S	10.3	76	11.0	15.9	Even
Delicious	S	12.9	90	10.2	16.9	Even
Alachua	S	9.4	75	7.0	16.8	Even
Nesbitt	S	13.1	64	9.9	15.8	Uneven
Southern Home	S	9.2	58	7.0	18.2	Even
Supreme	F	2.3	96	17.8	17.6	Even

^z S = self-fertile; F = female, requiring pollinizer.

In taste, texture and edible skin, ‘Southern Jewel’ compares favorably with ‘Supreme’, however it is earlier ripening and much more productive at Apopka, albeit smaller in size. Its formation of large berries that adhere to bunches is unique for a muscadine-type grape and should be useful for both fresh fruit and, possibly, processing. Although untested, its firm texture and adherence of berry to stem may make it unsuitable

for mechanical harvesting and wine-making. While it grows well on deep sandy soils, it's adaptation to other regions has not been confirmed.

'Southern Jewel' was publically released by the Cultivar Release Committee of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station (FAES), an agricultural research program of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Inquiries regarding the availability of 'Southern Jewel' should be directed to Florida Foundation Seed Producers, Inc. P.O. Box 110200, Gainesville, FL 32611-0200. A list of nurseries selling Florida recommended grape varieties may be obtained from most UF/IFAS County Extension Offices and the Florida Grape Grower's Association website (www.fgga.org).