

## Planting a Palette of Memories

Childhood memories seem to fade as we continue along life's path, but some memories are so strongly embedded in emotion that they keep us company along the way. My mother, who is well into her eighties, has shared many of her precious memories with me.

Mother recently painted a lively picture of her home when she was young. Grandpa's tractor was in the drive, and Toby, the dog, was chasing the fishmonger in his old jalopy. The mailman must have been expected because the red flag on the mailbox was up.

The chicken coup and smokehouse are there in her painting, as well as the big tree where there always hung a rope swing. Mother loved the vegetable garden, Grandma's flowers, and the grape arbor. She has wonderful memories of sitting in that arbor, eating those sweet grapes from the vine.

Many of us have fond memories of picking delicious sweet-tart grapes in the fall. If you grew up in the South, you probably feasted on muscadine grapes. The bunch grape, which is more reliable farther north, was once raised here as a crop in the early 1900's. A devastating disease destroyed that industry but didn't harm the native muscadine grapes.

There are now over 100 improved cultivars of muscadine grapes with different colors, sizes, and flavors. Uses for these grapes include jelly, juice and wine. And, of course, munching. Several of my munching favorites are Black Beauty, Southern Home, Fry and Summit.

Black Beauty is a huge, sweet grape with nearly black skin. Summit is a very sweet, medium sized grape. Fry, a large bronze grape, is probably the most popular. My favorite, Southern Home, is a winner in two ways. First, it is a delicious dark grape. And because the leaves have such an unusual feathery shape, it also serves as a very attractive ornamental vine.

Read more about starting your own memorable grape arbor at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs100> . Ask the Master Gardeners by calling the Extension Office, or visit them on Wednesday afternoons at the Fort White Library.

Attend our UF/IFAS Extension program, 'Back to Basics – Growing Food for the Family'. This five-session course, beginning February 28<sup>th</sup>, covers edible landscaping, fruits, and vegetable gardening. Call 753-5384 for details.

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