

Did You Know?

Just outside the scenic town of Geneva, NY, you will find the **ARS Plant Genetic Resources Unit (PGRU)** and the **ARS Grape Genetics Research Unit (GGRU)** that together serve as a safe harbor for many wild and domestic varieties of grapes, apples, tart cherries, and vegetables that grow around the world.

The collections are the result of expeditions by scientists and germplasm donations—seeds, leaves, branches and twigs, and often the plants themselves—from researcher and breeder collections, botanical gardens, seed companies, foreign exchange programs, private organizations, and growers. The end result is a genetic treasure trove.

Both units maintain and study materials for use in breeding and research on a myriad of diseases, pests and pathogens, from powdery mildews that attack grapes to scab diseases that threaten our apple orchards.

Maintaining the collections is no small chore. Each sample must be characterized and its description posted to the ARS Genetic Resources Information Network. The staff is working on digital images to accompany the descriptions.

In addition to collections at Geneva, some seeds from the Geneva collections are preserved at the ARS National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation (NCGRP) in Fort Collins, CO. PGRU and NCGRP are part of a network of ARS repositories nationwide that make up the ARS National Plant Germplasm System—a cooperative effort by public and private organizations established to preserve genetic plant diversity.

New material comes in to the Geneva units all the time. The latest inventory includes 1,500 grape samples, 1,300 onion samples, 230 buckwheat samples, 5,800 tomato varieties, 130 tart cherry varieties, 7,000 apple trees, and 2,200 cole crop varieties, such as cabbage and kale. The collection boasts many

heirloom varieties grown centuries ago, like tomatoes, preserving these crops for future generations.

Read “[ARS Collections—Roots of a Blossoming Science](#)” to learn about ARS’ collections on plants, animals, arthropods, parasites, and microbes. ❖

Written by **Tara T. Weaver-Missick**, ARS Information Staff.

Grapes.



Apples in the ARS germplasm collection.

Please submit story ideas and national award items to Tara T. Weaver-Missick, tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov or call 301-504-1663.