

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Mark Saunders
202.268.6524
mark.r.saunders@usps.gov
usps.com/news



2016 is an Excellent Year for Grape Stamps

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Postal Service is issuing a new 5-cent Grape stamp today that features a stylized illustration of two clusters of pinot noir deep-purple grapes growing on the vine among several green leaves.

Art Director Derry Noyes of Washington, DC, designed this stamp with an existing illustration by John Burgoyne of West Barnstable, MA. Burgoyne used pen, ink and watercolor to produce the original art.

A member of the genus *Vitis*, grapes have been cultivated for thousands of years. The fruits grow on woody, climbing vines; botanically, they are berries with a juicy, pulpy interior covered with an outer skin. According to the Department of Agriculture, 7.8 million tons of grapes were grown commercially in the United States in 2014.

Viticulture — the cultivation of grapes — dates to the very beginning of civilization. Grape cultivation is mentioned in the Old Testament, when Noah, after the flood, planted a vineyard. Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs include references to wine production dating back millennia, and archaeologists have found caches of wine amphorae in Greek and Phoenician shipwrecks.

The pinot noir grapes pictured on the stamp art are aptly named. The deep-purple fruit — *noir*, French for “black” — grow in tight clusters shaped like a pinecone; *pinot* is a variant of *pineau*, the diminutive of *pin*, which means “pine” in French. The name refers to both the grape and the wine it produces.

Believed to be one of the oldest cultivated grapes in the *Vitis* genus, the pinot noir grape is also one of the most difficult to grow. The thin-skinned fruit suffers from a variety of diseases, is sensitive to soil conditions and the size of the crop yield, and is difficult to ripen. The harvested grapes are also delicate

and require careful handling — but grown in ideal conditions and treated properly after harvesting, they produce one of the most highly prized and elegant wines in the world.

The famous red-wine grape was once thought to grow well only in Burgundy, France, but it is now successfully grown in cooler climates around the world, including areas of the United States — northern California, New York and Oregon — among others.

The stamp, created primarily for business mailers, is available in coils of 10,000. It also is available in strips of 500 for \$25, item #78195 by calling 800-STAMP-24 (800-782-6724).

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, at The Postal Store website at usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-782-6724. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Grapes Stamp
Cancellation Services
8300 NE Underground Drive, Pillar 210
Kansas City, MO 64144-0001

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark up to a quantity of 50. There is a 5-cent charge for each additional postmark over 50. All orders must be postmarked by April 19, 2016.

Ordering First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog, online at www.usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-STAMP-24 (800-782-6724). Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service
Catalog Request
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

There is one philatelic product for this stamp issue:

781916, First-Day Cover, \$0.98.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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