

River Bend Naturalists Notebook

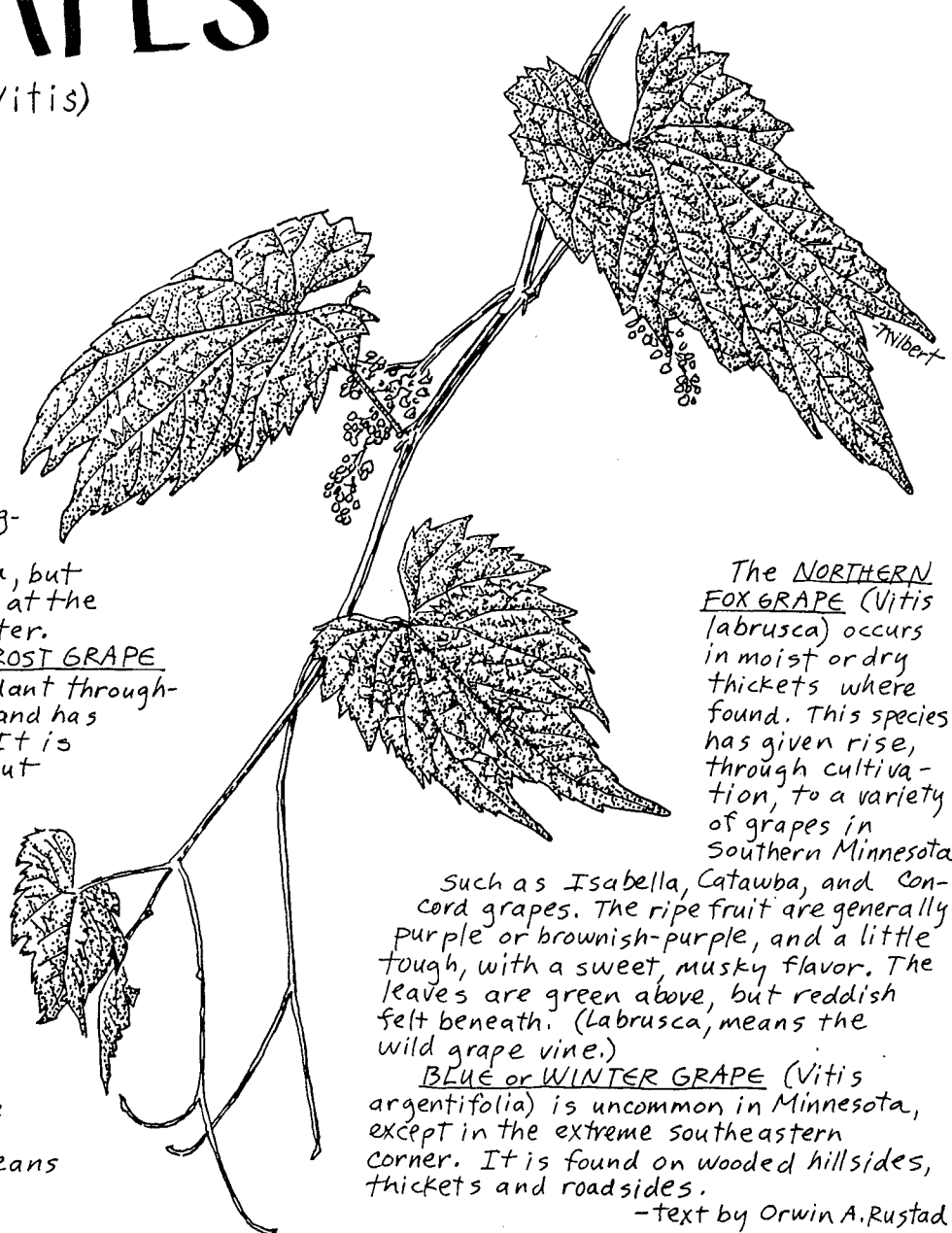
Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

GRAPES

(Vitis)

There are about forty species of grapes belonging to the genus *Vitis*, with three in Minnesota, but only one found growing at the River Bend Nature Center.

The RIVERBANK or FROST GRAPE (*Vitis riparia*) is abundant throughout most of the state, and has tendrils for climbing. It is very common throughout the Nature Center. Its grapes are an excellent source of food for a great variety of wildlife. The edible fruits are quite large, black when ripe, and somewhat tart, becoming sweet after a frost, thus the name - FROST GRAPE. The leaves are green both above and beneath. (*Riparia*, means of the river bank.)



The NORTHERN FOX GRAPE (*Vitis labrusca*) occurs in moist or dry thickets where found. This species has given rise, through cultivation, to a variety of grapes in Southern Minnesota,

such as Isabella, Catawba, and Concord grapes. The ripe fruit are generally purple or brownish-purple, and a little tough, with a sweet, musky flavor. The leaves are green above, but reddish felt beneath. (*Labrusca*, means the wild grape vine.)

BLUE or WINTER GRAPE (*Vitis argentifolia*) is uncommon in Minnesota, except in the extreme southeastern corner. It is found on wooded hillsides, thickets and roadsides.

-text by Orwin A. Rustad