



Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Grapevine

June, 2011

VINE TALK

Summer 2011. To bloom or not to bloom, that is the question. The late cold season has delayed the natural cycle of most vines in the area. It could be a good thing though. The first weekend in June brought record rainfall, more than 3" in the mountains before dawn on Saturday. It is almost unprecedented. There is a silver lining however, and perhaps a method to the celestial madness.

The delayed bloom means that many vineyards are barely in flower and the rain will not suppress pollination unless the flowers are out. Instead, the natural water (a politically "green" term) could feed the vines and puff up the buds. If a hot dry spell follows this wet crazy weekend we could be in for a fabulous bloom and record set. If not, we could be looking at a season similar to what the French refer to as "couleure", loosely translated to mean nasty wet spring contributing to a pathetic set.

Even a bad set isn't all negative. A cold spring and late summer usually means overall reduced heat units for the season. Late ripening varieties like Syrah, even Chardonnays in some areas, might benefit from significant crop thinning either through poor set or manually post set if Mother Nature doesn't do it for you. Review last year's harvest date and the harvest numbers recorded for brix, TA and pH. This season looks very similar to last and you may want to adjust your yields accordingly. Last season turned out remarkably well for many Pinot Noirs. Later ripening varieties squeaked through. Fortunately the commercial trend is toward lower alcohol wines, which will be perfect for a season like this. Studies show that the maturation process of the individual berry clusters benefit most from fruit thinning at set or post set. Fruit thinning at veraison creates uniformity at harvest but has less effect on the overall development of the berry. A poor set could allow the vine to better ripen what it has in a cold year.

Be prepared for a flush of late weed growth. The rains are sure to awaken a mass of seeds that may have been dormant for a decade. Canopy management will have to be a huge priority. The extra water will send shoots skyrocketing up. Don't hesitate to hedge if growth gets out

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Next Program

June 15, 3:00pm: Fertigation & Plant Tissue Analysis. When to sample and what to sample to determine nutritional requirements of your vines.

Speaker: Cliff Low, owner, Perry Laboratory

Location: Vine Hill Winery, 2300 Jarvis Rd., Santa Cruz
(see directions on the back)

Tissue analysis is one of the best tools available to monitor the nutrient status of your vines. It will pinpoint your fertilizer requirements and result in a more cost-effective program. If you wait until you see visual symptoms the problem already exists and the damage has already been done on growth, yield, and fruit quality. Prevent nutrient deficiencies from occurring in the first place.

As usual, please bring a bottle of wine to share.

President's Corner

Petiole analysis or leaf blade? There are two schools of thought. Trials that one might be better than the other are not conclusive. Some tests have found Nitrogen more correlated to blade analysis*; Potassium to petioles. "There does not exist an answer to your question (as to which is better), hence the debate," says Mike Anderson of U.C. Davis, who ran parallel tests using petioles and blades from the same vineyard blocks and concluded "...confusion." He advises that, no matter which you do, sampling is critical to understanding your vineyard.

What is important is that consistency in sampling, whether petiole or blade, is important to establishing a baseline and a history for comparison.

At our next meeting Cliff Low of Perry Labs will be speaking to us about petiole analysis. Analysis is done at bloom, so come to the June 15 meeting and learn more about it. And then, look forward to our summer bbq end of July/early August at Bruce and Caroline Manildi's, when They will roast up one of their Fogline Farms sustainable pigs for us! Stay tuned for the date. Hopefully we will have

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of hand. Non-irrigated old vines will appreciate the long deep drink before summer and will probably show remarkable growth and recovery this season. If you took advantage of the late rain to throw down some compost or extra mineral supplement your vines and especially the roots will benefit tremendously.

Be vigilant when you finally see bloom in the vineyard. This is the most delicate phase of the vineyard's journey. Apply sprays in tight intervals during this phase to protect the vines from powdery mildew and botrytis. If you haven't been shoot thinning get out there and do it. The fruit on the vines hate crowded wet conditions and infectious fungal diseases love them. Keep light and air a top priority in the canopy. All the sprays in the world will do nothing if the canopy is too dense.

Bloom is also the time to take petiole samples. Get out in your vineyard and sample the weak blocks separately from the more uniform areas. Petiole samples provide an excellent real time snapshot of what your vines may need or not need from a nutritional standpoint. Micronutrient levels, especially zinc and boron, directly contribute to well formed clusters and whole fruit. Cliff Perry from Perry Labs will expand on this important subject during our next meeting.

Early on there was frost damage in some vineyards. I have heard of rust, and odd looking growth. Most of that can be attributed to the cold conditions. If you lost your fruit to frost in spring, take care of the vines, grow the roots, and plan a nice vacation. You may not get much harvest but at least your worries are over for the year.

I hope we all get a chance to enjoy a summer when the sun finally comes out and hopefully decides to stay awhile.

The Santa Cruz Mountains grow some of the finest wine in the world. We can do that in a year like this as in any other. It will just take more attention.

Buena suerte!

Prudy Foxx
Foxx Viticulture
Santa Cruz Mountains

Hospitality / Culinary – Need Volunteers

We would like to enlist the help of a few people to help with the Hospitality ie **food**, at our meetings and annual BBQ in the summer. June Salisbury will coordinate those that would like to volunteer.

What is involved you ask? Purchasing food and the appropriate eating & serving utensils for our meetings and submitting for reimbursement. There will be a budget and a basic suggested list of what is needed based on our past meeting needs. 2 or 3 people could help with each meeting.

How do I sign up? If you are interested, contact June or Mary either by e-mail or at the June meeting.

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some warm summer weather by then!

See you at the June 15 meeting.

Mary Lindsay
President, VASCM

*An article by Joe Traynor from Grape Grower Magazine, Feb. 2003 about blade analysis and N can be found online at <http://www.beesource.com/point-of-view/joe-traynor/leaf-vs-petiole-analysis-to-find-n-in-grapes/> .

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Support for the Wine Education Curriculum at Cabrillo College

Cabrillo College has been offering a wine education program under the direction of Sue Slater for the past few years as part of its Culinary and Hospitality Management (CAHM) program. Due to budget cuts, the wine education classes have been discontinued, effective in the Fall. According to the college, budget cuts are being made to "non-essential" programs, including popular community-based courses, which is apparently how the wine education program is viewed.

The program is more than a wine appreciation course. It is a serious adjunct to the CAHM curriculum, with graduates that have gone on to wine industry jobs at local hotels, restaurants, wineries and wine businesses. These are students who have become familiar with and serve as ambassadors for our local wineries and wine industry.

A committee of local wine industry supporters has been formed to lobby to save the program (or at least some of the classes). The mission of the "Save Wine Education at Cabrillo" committee is to "provide a wine certificate program which will provide educated and trained employees who can continue to foster the growth of the economic well-being of Santa Cruz County." The committee has a Facebook page – just search under "Save Wine Education at Cabrillo".

The VASCM Board has wholeheartedly agreed to support the drive to appeal the decision cutting the wine education program at Cabrillo. As a group, we have supported the CAHM and wine education program through our annual holiday party at Sesnon House over the past couple of years. And many of you have probably supported the program in various ways individually.

If you want to support the wine education program, letters can be sent to Dr. Brian King, Superintendent/President, Cabrillo College, 6500 Soquel Dr., Aptos, CA 95003; or email to brking@cabrillo.edu .

A sample letter (that you can detach or copy and use) is on the following page. Or, you can sign a copy at our next meeting if you prefer and we will submit it for you.

2011 MEMBERSHIP

Find the 2011 membership form at www.vascm.org .

Directions to Vine Hill for the 3/18 meeting:

2300 Jarvis Rd., Santa Cruz

From Highway 17 Between Scotts Valley and Summit Road:

- Exit at Vine Hill Road
- Drive downhill approximately 2 miles
- Turn left onto Jarvis Road
- Drive uphill approximately 2-1/4 miles (The last 1/2-mile is steep and narrow)
- The Winery driveway is the first right after you pass Rider Ridge Rd

Directions and map at www.vinehillwinery.com



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Newsletter



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