



The Grapevine

Newsletter of the
Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

January, 2005

VINE TALK

Welcome to 2005! I hope that everyone enjoyed a festive holiday and had a chance to rest and reflect on the rewards and challenges of 2004. Stop a moment and give thanks for abundant life, good fortune, and a bountiful harvest.

Now back to work. Things to think about in the vineyard in winter include weed control, pruning for crop and canopy management, and dormant sprays for early disease suppression. This year we can add mealybug trapping and plans for the new water regulations.

By now everyone should have filed a NOI or obtained the waiver for the water control regs. We will discuss more on this at the next meeting. In the meantime feel free to consult the website for more information and updates.
(www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast)

IN THE VINEYARD

January is a time to think of weed control, pruning, and gophers. Because of the warm temperatures and early heavy rains last fall the weeds are up and very active. Get out and check the weed growth under the vines. Getting a handle on this pest now will greatly reduce cost as the season progresses.

There are several options to herbicide use if you so choose. Smaller vineyards can control weeds the old fashioned way with a hoe, especially right around the vine.

Next Meetings

January 19: Next VASCM Meeting
3:00pm, Clos la Chance Winery, San Martin
(directions on last page)

Business meeting.

'Vine Talk' on pruning and weed control.

Presentation on the new water control regulations, including Mary Ellen Dick, Region 3 Farm Bureau.

Wine tasting in the cellar.

... And Events

January 19-22: Eco Farm Conference
Asilomar, Monterey www.eco-farm.org

January 25-27: Unified Wine & Grape Symposium, Sacramento.
www.unifiedsymposium.org

February 8-10: World Ag Expo, Tulare
www.worldagexpo.com

Note: Meetings/workshops to be held every two months. Each meeting to include a 'vine talk' summary of timely vineyard tasks.

In-row cultivators are effective if it isn't too wet, and propane flamers suppress growth. Mulching suppresses weeds and there are machines that mow the aisle and throw the cuttings under the rows as mulch.

Chemical options include an under row pass of Round-up and/or a pre-emergent herbicide during vine dormancy. The aisles can be mowed. Consider an Herbi or Weedseeker machine that reduces

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chemical use while still providing maximum efficiency.

Deal with weeds under the vines any way you can. Bigger weeds under the vine row are a bigger headache later. Be proactive under the vine row.

If your vineyard has experienced mildew or botrytis pressure in the past year consider putting on a dormant spray of lime sulfur. Research does not support the efficacy of this practice but there are many growers who are confident that this practice has contributed to less fungal disease during the growing season. As usual, coverage is key.

Pruning is possibly my favorite vineyard activity. Prune to encourage shoots that will grow in the direction that your trellis design is built for. VSP shoots should grow up. Remove shoots that grow laterally or down.

Grapes love light and air. Leave enough space between spurs for shoots and clusters to emerge and grow without crowding each other out.

Think also how many buds you are leaving and how that may affect your projected crop load. Were you able to ripen your fruit last year? You may need to adjust the number of buds you leave for a top quality crop.

Also, start considering floor management for the season. The cleaner your environment, the more sustainably you will be able to grow your grapes. Consider adopting a weather monitoring system to help plan your spray program. Consider using compost to enhance the biology of your soil and enhance the natural immunity of your vines. Think about what kind of spray, nutrient and water management program you want to use this year.

Consult your sustainability workbook to remind yourself of best growing practices that will aid you in producing the premium

fruit that the Santa Cruz Mountain appellation is famous for.

The Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains is looking forward to some special projects this year. We are developing a logo, initiating a grape stomp, participating in water regulation classes, and forging a more productive relationship with the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association.

Have a fantastic 2005! We will see you in the vineyard.

Regards,
Prudy Foxx
President, Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

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At the March meeting (date and location tbd) we'll hold elections for Board positions. More information will be forthcoming in the next newsletter.



Check Out Our Website: www.vascm.org

The VASCM website includes information on upcoming meetings and events, copies of speaker presentations and newsletters, links to valuable resources. You'll find all the listings for the VASCM Buy/Sell Exchange. Plus, we're adding profiles of our members' vineyards. To be included, send information on your vineyard, including acreage, varieties, when it was founded and other history and information you'd like to include to mary@munsvineyard.com. Also provide a picture if you have it, or we can arrange to take one. Come back often to see what's new!

The Vine Mealybug: Infestation, Identification & Control

From VASCM's Integrated Pest Management Workshop, Nov. 18, 2004

The vine mealybug (VMB) is a relatively new species in California, but it has spread rapidly and it's coming our way. It has been found in vineyards in Monterey and Santa Clara Counties. The VMB has the potential to become one of our most important vineyard pests. This was the warning from Larry Bettiga, U.C. Farm Advisor during our November Integrated Pest Management workshop at Cooper-Garrod.

Except for its lack of a tail, the VMB is difficult to distinguish from other, more common mealybugs. The VMB, however, is more difficult to control and causes greater damage. They can infest an entire vine, feeding on the grapes and under the bark, where sprays don't reach. They feed out further on the canopy than other mealybugs and produce more 'dew', which attracts black soot. They can invade the soil. Prolonged infestation can weaken vines, reduce vine growth, yields and quality of fruit, and increases the spread of viral diseases. Effective treatment for VMB requires expensive, prolonged chemical application that can disrupt sustainable integrated pest management programs.

VMB is spread by infested plants, birds, farm equipment, fruit, leaves, vineyard workers. But primarily it's been spread by nursery stock. Ask your nursery what treatments (i.e. heat) they've done to prevent the spread of VMB.

The key to eradication is to identify the pest ASAP and treat promptly. Pheromone traps (one per 20 acres, available from Western Farm Service) are an essential identification tool, and should be in place by the end of March. They should be examined at least every two weeks. It is recommended that you trap if you've planted stock since 1998, or if your vineyard is adjacent to an infected site or has been visited by personnel from an infested site. Train your harvest and pruning crews to recognize the pest. Identification posters are available from Larry Bettiga's office.

The Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner's Office has mealybug traps and lures available. You can stop by the office and pick them up, then return them for analysis. The lab will let you know whether any mealybugs have been identified from your traps. If they come back positive then proceed with treatment options. If negative, keep trapping and focus on biodiversity in the vineyard.

Treatment is easier on younger vines - the bark is thinner and the root system less complex so there are fewer places for the pest to hide. The presence of ants, which 'farm' mealybugs, on your vines is an indicator of infestation. Ants protect the VMBs from parasitic wasps, so it might help to get rid of the ants. If VMB is first discovered in late summer or fall, apply a postharvest treatment of a foliar insecticide to kill mealybugs on the leaves and wood so that the infestation is not spread to other parts of the vineyard when leaves drop or when the vines are pruned. Postharvest treatments are only recommended the first season that vine mealybug is discovered.

Starting the year, apply a (pre-budbreak) delayed dormant treatment of chlorpyrifos (Lorsban®) or buprofezin (Applaud®) and then treat with imidacloprid (Admire®) at bloom. Make either a single application of imidacloprid (Admire®) or a split one, depending on soil type. During summer, treat with buprofezin (Applaud®) if insects are active. Other materials (methomyl and dimethoate) are available for treating vine mealybug during summer, but they are not as effective and are more disruptive of beneficials.

More details on vine mealybugs, including details on trapping, can be found at the following websites:

http://cemonterey.ucdavis.edu/viticulture/vine_mealybug.htm

<http://vinemealybug.uckac.edu/>

<http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/>

Officers of the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains:

President: Prudy Foxx, 831-359-9100,
Prudyfoxx@aol.com

Treasurer: Lawrence Ives, Calabazas Creek
Research, 408-741-8680,
rlives@calcreek.com

Program Chair/newsletter editor:
Mary Lindsay, Muns Vineyard/Lindsay PR,
408-984-7242, mary@munsvineyard.com

Vineyard Inventory: Rick Anzalone,
408-358-6323 or 408-206-2364

The Buy/Sell Exchange

VASCM's email-based Buy/Sell Exchange allows growers and wineries to connect for the purpose of buying and selling appellation grapes, as well as other wine industry related services and products.

To participate on the Exchange, send an email message to the list mailman at VASCM-owner@kkn.net. You can also view the Exchange listings on our website at www.VASCM.org.

Directions to Clos la Chance Winery in San Martin (for January 19 meeting):

Clos la Chance is 20 miles from the intersection of Hwy. 85 and 101.

Take Hwy. 101 South, exit Tennant Ave.

Left on Monterey Rd.

Right on Watsonville Rd. and go 2-1/2 miles to Hummingbird Lane.

Left on Hummingbird Lane and follow to the winery.

Phone: 408/686-1050

Map available at www.closlachance.com

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



The Viticulture Association of the
Santa Cruz Mountains
P.O. Box 126
Saratoga, CA 95071

Newsletter



***Next Meeting: January 19 – The New Water Control Regulations
Plus: Winter Pruning & Weed Control***

