



The Grapevine

Newsletter of the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

February, 2006

VINE TALK

Winter. Happy New Year! The vines are asleep and growers' hands have hopefully had a chance to rest and recuperate from last years exciting ride. The fruit produced in the Santa Cruz Mountains is making great strides in producing consistent outstanding quality. The wines from the last few vintages continue to escalate the stellar reputation of our historic mountain appellation. This is great news to growers and incentive to keep up the good work, keep the vines clean, and to get the fruit ripe; thus achieving our appellation's finest potential.

With the winter festivities behind us (thank you to everyone who attended our annual Christmas party – what a great time) we are ready to return to the vineyard and check on our sleeping vines. Now is the time to begin a **weed control** program. Consider burning short grasses and broadleaves back with propane or in a very small vineyard situation consider using mulch. Larger operations may have access to an in-row mower or tiller. This latter application is only feasible if the ground is sufficiently stable to drive on without compacting the soil. Vineyards with a sound cover crop program will be easier to gain entry into after the rains. Some organic growers have found success with a commercial grade vinegar spray to burn back weeds. Use of a focused spray of Round up or combination of pre-emergent and Round up is another alternative. Whatever your approach, be sure to address the weed issue now while it is still small and seemingly insignificant.

The other big winter project is **pruning**. Timing is everything. The earlier you prune the earlier opportunity you have for bud break. On the other hand, earlier pruning and large pruning wounds can expose your vines to Eutypa, a

Next Meetings

February 24 : Next VASCM Meeting
“A History of Santa Cruz Mountains Vineyards”
at Mountain Winery, Saratoga
(directions on last page)

3:00pm – vineyard tour with Jeffrey Patterson
4:00pm - Presentation: Charles Sullivan,
author, “Like Modern Edens”, in the historic winery building

- Wine tasting – bring a bottle to share

Mark your calendar:

March 23: Sustainability Workshop on
“Ecosystem Management”, at Cooper-Garrod
(more information forthcoming)

Late April: “Organic Winegrape Growing”, at Silver Mountain Vineyard

... And Events

March 25-26: “Pinot Paradise”

For tickets & more info: contact the SCMWA

very nasty pathogen that attacks older vines and is associated with rainy conditions after winter pruning. At this time there is no registered product to spray against Eutypa. Your best defense is to develop a strategy. If your vines are older and especially if you have seen the telltale wedge shaped black on the interior of the cane or spur you need to make a plan. Try to prune during dry conditions when the weather forecast is sunny for days to come. Never prune in the rain or just prior to a storm if you can help it. If you think that your vineyard is susceptible to Eutypa consider pruning later in the season (closer to bud

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(Vine Talk, cont.)

break) or pruning twice. Prune once now to remove the major brush 4 spurs up and once just before bud break to remove newly infected wood. This is time consuming and not very efficient but Eutypa can be a very serious disease that will compromise fruit production and ultimately kill your vine. Older vines and big pruning wounds are most susceptible so be aware of this issue.

Finally we come to the pruning itself. This is possibly the most pleasurable part of the vineyard year. It's a quiet, contemplative time that carries the opportunity to shape the future with a single cut. This is a time to be realistic about fruit production and your best chance to control the way the vine will grow this year. Balanced pruning is the key. If you overprune the vine it may compensate by putting out all kinds of unfruitful vegetative growth. Leaving too many spurs promotes unwanted shoots that must be either removed after bud break or fought against all year as they compete with the fruit for light, air and nutrients. Remember the goal is to grow fruit with enough canopy to support that fruit. Balance is the key:

- Leave enough space between spurs to allow for fruit to form and mature.
- Avoid crowding spurs and resist the urge to maintain spindly, unhealthy spurs.
- If you must keep an undesirable spur to maintain the spur position, cut it down to one bud to encourage healthy establishment for next year.
- If the vine is over-vigorous you may need to leave an extra long spur at the end of the cordon to eat up some of the vigor and then cut it off in the spring.

Always think two years ahead when pruning. Cane pruning is a viable alternative in vineyards where fruit set has been an issue (and other factors have been ruled out) or in cooler areas.

We can't forget the government. The Regional Water Quality Control Board will be looking for your "**Farm Plan**" that shows that you are thinking about where any potential runoff from your vineyard is going. As in any tedious bureaucratic project there are kernels of knowledge and new ideas to be born from this process. Get it over with and send it in.

On a more positive note, **Biodiesel as an alternative to diesel fuel** is becoming a more

practical and economical alternative. There are stations offering this fuel popping up on the Central Coast. Go to www.biodiesel.org for more information. J.B. Dewar Inc. in San Luis Obispo (805-543-0180 and McCormix Corporation in Santa Barbara (805) 963-9366 are both petroleum distributors with product available. Call them for pricing and more information. In most cases and especially in newer tractors (from 1994) biodiesel can be substituted for diesel fuel in your tractor without any special retrofit. "Biodiesel reduces emissions and poses no threat to human health. It is nontoxic, biodegradable and essentially free of sulfur and aromatics, significantly reducing emissions of carbon monoxide, particulate matter, unburned hydrocarbons and sulfates." (National Biodiesel Board). This is just one more thing to think about as you contemplate your rows.

Get out in your vineyard and walk off the holiday feast. Observe the winter structure. Imagine a prosperous new year laden with healthy vibrant fruit destined for the premium fine wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains full with flavors and character unique to our special appellation. Salud.

Prudy Foxx
President, Viticulture Assn.
of the Santa Cruz Mountains



February Meeting on the History of Santa Cruz Mountains Vineyards

We have been working since the end of last year on some new programs to bring you early in 2006. We think our first meeting of the year is a very special opportunity – we have the privilege of hearing from Charles Sullivan, historian and author of "Like Modern Edens", who will talk about the history of the vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains from the 1800s into the present. And what better place for this subject than the historic Mountain Winery, founded by Paul Masson in 1901.

At 3:00pm Jeffrey Patterson will give a tour and talk about the replanting of the historic vineyards on the property. Meet Jeffrey in the vineyard as you drive up the road (before reaching the main parking lot).

Charles Sullivan's presentation will start at 4:00pm in the historic winery building. Although once thought to be sold out, additional copies of his book, "Like Modern Edens", have been found and will be available for sale at this meeting. As usual, bring a bottle of wine to share.

Please note that we are adopting a new membership policy that will go into effect starting with this meeting. Non-members are welcome to our meetings but will be charged \$15 to attend.

March Sustainability Workshop on Ecosystem Management

Continuing our emphasis and encouragement on sustainability we have been working once again with the Wine Institute and the Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance to bring another workshop to the Santa Cruz Mts. – this one on ecosystem management. The date is being finalized but it looks like it will be for a half day on March 23 at Cooper Garrod in Saratoga. Bill Cooper has been instrumental in planning this program and, as you may know, Bill is very involved in creating the statewide sustainability program.

We will provide further details. Topics will include: water control protection, including erosion control and riparian/creek habitat; biodiversity, including native plantings, wildlife corridors, beneficial insects, hedges; and cover crops.

For those who did not take the original sustainability self-assessment program two years ago, an opportunity will be provided at this program to self-assess on this topic. You can find out more information on the Sustainability Alliance and programs at http://www.wineinstitute.org/communications/SustainablePractices/project_description.htm .

Stay Tuned: Late-April Meeting on Organic Winegrape Growing

At Silver Mountain Vineyards - more information on this meeting will be forthcoming.

Membership Update – Dues are Due

A reminder that annual dues have been increased from \$25 to \$50 this year, due at the beginning of the calendar year (as agreed by the membership last year). If you have not already paid (or forgot about the increase and need to pay the rest) you can do so at the February meeting, or send in the membership form included with this newsletter.

We are also implementing a new policy qualifying membership. As the VASCM is an organization for winegrape growers we are requiring that members grow/manage winegrapes/vineyards. We welcome friends of growers and other professionals providing services to growers to our meetings, but as non-members they will be charged \$15/meeting to attend.



from Ridge Vineyards

On the Website

Check out the features and information available on the website at <http://www.vascm.org>. It is a great resource!

- A list of all the vineyards in the appellation, including links to photos and websites
- Summaries and presentations from prior meetings
- Seasons in the vineyard: vineyard practices according to time of year
- List of vineyard resources, i.e. vineyard consultants, suppliers, etc.
- CAWG newsletters
- And more!

Thank you to our Webmaster, Ed Muns!

**Gold Medal-Winning Wines from
Santa Cruz Mt. Vineyards!**
**- Results of the 2006 San Francisco
Chronicle Wine Competition**

Congratulations to our appellation vineyards for their award-winning fruit! Local wineries won a total of 78 medals in the SF Chronicle Competition, and 49 of those were for appellation wines, including 14 out of the 19 Gold Medals won, 17 out of the 30 Silver, and 16 out of 29 Bronze. Pinot Noir had a particularly good showing, winning more than one third of the medals, with two thirds of these made from appellation fruit. Seven out of the 10 Gold Medals for Pinot came from our local vineyards. Hallcrest Vineyards made a particularly stellar showing as the winery with the most medals - eight altogether, all for Pinot Noir, six of which are from Santa Cruz Mts. vineyards, including all four of its Gold Medals.

Our **Gold Medal Santa Cruz Mt. vineyards** include:

- Bargetto Winery: **Gold Best of Class** for its 2000 La Vita, in the Italian Varietals category, from its **Regan Vineyard**.

For Pinot Noir:

- Storrs Winery 2002 Santa Cruz Mountains
- **Windy Oaks** Estate, 2003 Henry's Block
- Hallcrest Vineyards, **Belle Farm Vineyards** 2003 & 2004
- Hallcrest Vineyards: **Veranda Vineyard** 2003
- Hallcrest Vineyards: **Vista del Mare** 2004
- Soquel Vineyards: **Saveria Vineyards** 2004

Cabernet Sauvignon & Bordeaux Blends:

- Byington Winery: **Bates Ranch** 2002
- Thomas Fogarty Winery 2002 Lexington Meritage

For Chardonnay: Beauregard Vineyards, 2003 **Trout Gulch Vineyard**

Syrah/Shiraz : **Burrell School Vineyards** 2004 Estate

For Merlot: Cinnabar Vineyards 2003

These awards are testimony to the high quality of our appellation wines. We also want to congratulate all of our local wineries for all of their awards. A complete list of appellation awards is on our website at <http://www.vascm.org>.

Directions to Mountain Winery:

*14831 Pierce Road, Saratoga
408-741-2822*

From Hwy. 85, exit Saratoga Ave.
Make a right if you've driven south on Hwy. 85;
make a left if you've driven north on Hwy. 85
Drive up Saratoga Ave. app. 3.7 miles, through
the town of Saratoga
(Saratoga Ave. becomes Big Basin Way)
Turn right at Pierce Road (at the Mountain Winery
sign) and go about 0.2 miles
Turn left at the Mountain Winery gates

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the Santa Cruz Mountains:**

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