



Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Grapevine

January, 2008

President's Corner

A Few Words from Your President

I'd like to start off by wishing each one of you a Happy New Year. Wasn't last year a great year for growers? How many of us think that this year will be a good or even better? Your answer to this question separates the real farmers from the rest.

While the vines have been sleeping, your board has been lining up a great year of events for you. It all starts off with a meeting and party (New Year) at Thomas Fogarty Winery on February 12th. We are going to have a mini-buffet with some fabulous food – so bring your appetites. It's FREE for members and \$10 for guests and you can pay your 2008 membership at the door. We'll continue this policy throughout the year.

We have four more meetings planned for April, June, August and a mid-November party (two parties this year!!) One meeting will be held at the newly remodeled Vine Hill Winery and various topics will include understanding our soils by a UC or Cabrillo professor and fertilizer tutorial. The topics are still open, so if you'd like to learn about a specific topic or program, let us know. Even better, if you'd like to set up one of the meetings, we could use the help. Your contributions can only make our organization better and more interesting.

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VINE TALK

2008.

Ah winter, my favorite time of year in the vineyard. The bones of the vines lie exposed, revealing at a glance the experience of what has come before. There are four tasks in winter: observation and evaluation, pruning, weed and gopher control, and the enhancement of biodiversity in the vineyard. Taking time now to prepare the vineyard for the season to come will pay off handsomely during the

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Next Meeting

February 12, 3:00-5:30: Next VASCM Meeting "Vineyard Practices to Produce 90+ Points Wines", with Michael Martella at Thomas Fogarty Vineyards, Woodside

At least seven Thomas Fogarty estate wines rated 90 points and above in Wine Enthusiast in 2007. Good wine starts with good grapes and the vineyard practices to grow them. Michael Martella will give us a tour of the vineyards and share with us his vineyard practices to get us on the right track for the year.

As always, bring a bottle of wine to share for tasting at the end of the meeting. We will have a mini-party for the new year. Remember that the after-meeting tasting is strictly that - a tasting. Drink responsibly or bring a designated driver. *Directions on back of newsletter.*

And Events

March (Date tbd):

Sustainability Self-Assessment Workshop: probably early March (date TBD) at Bargetto Winery. For all those who have not already gone through the self-assessment, and a chance for those who have to update your assessment. New topics have been added. More info will be forthcoming. More info on the sustainability program is on our website at <http://www.vascm.org/sustainability.htm>

March 29-30 - Pinot Paradise. The Grand Cruz tasting and technical sessions (which are being planned) are Sunday at the historic Villa Ragusa conference center in Campbell. This proved to be a great location last year - spacious, and parking is close and plentiful. The Pinot Pathways tour of wineries is on Saturday. Tickets are on sale! You can get tickets from the SCMWA at www.scmwa.com or call 831-685-8463.

**The VASCM has a new address:
PO Box 8092
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-8092**

President, continued

In addition, we have a couple of workshops planned. The first one will be on grafting and another one on sustainability.

We are contemplating another few ideas depending on your interest. We have discussed putting together a calendar with vineyard shots throughout the year from our various vineyards, or perhaps one featuring our many wonderful vineyard dogs. What do you think?

Would some of you be interested in a small profile of your vineyard including some pictures to be featured in one of these newsletters? Many of us would like to learn more about our fellow members and their vineyards.

What about a VASCM kiosk at the Agricultural History Museum at the Santa Cruz County Fair Grounds? Or developing wine glasses with our new VASCM logo? What other ideas do you have?

~ Bruce

VINE TALK (continued)

hot summer days when you may prefer to find some shade and watch your efforts mature.

First with the **observation and evaluation**. Pick a fresh winter morning, a day with no rain and new sun. Wear some rubber boots and fresh socks and whatever else gives you comfort and keeps your mind on the vines. Bring some coffee or some other refreshment that inspires you (it's after 5 somewhere...). Start walking your vineyard. Observe how the vine is growing, the size of the dormant canes. Look to see how the canes were groomed last year. Are they all tangled together or are they separated by a few inches, each with its own space standing tall? (or hanging over like finely combed hair if you don't have VSP). What is the diameter of the canes? Observe if they are spindly and thin, or thick and robust, or in between like the size of a number 2 pencil. Check the distance between the buds. Look to see whether this distance is consistent or if some nodes are farther apart and some closer together. Look at the shape of the buds to see if there is potential below the surface. These observations will guide you to your winter pruning decisions.

Winter pruning is the first step to setting the crop load for the following year. Some of this has already been determined based on last year's heat and harvest and stored nutrient resources in the vine. Now is your chance to get involved with what the vine has to offer this season. First off, evaluate your pruning equipment. Clean, oil and sharpen your pruners. Or just buy new ones if the old can't be salvaged. A reliable, sharp pair of pruners will protect your hand and perform clean precise cuts the first

time and sets the pace for a new year of productive and clean viticulture.

Next, start pruning. If the vines are mature, prune for fruit production. Most of our vineyards are spur pruned. Prune these vines so that the spurs are evenly spaced along on the cordon. Always be thinking about light and air. Imagine the shoots coming out of each remaining bud and watch in your minds eye where these shoots will grow. Guard against allowing shoots to grow into each other or to cross over each other. Prune out the spurs that will cross or crowd. Keep the area immediately adjacent to the trellis free from growth so that shoots do not smash into the structure while trying to elongate. Imagine how the spray is going to penetrate through the canopy as it grows. Prune out areas that may present blockages as leaves and shoots fill in all of the empty space. Cane pruning is an option for some varieties or to promote fruitfulness on cooler sites where the basal buds have shown no fruit.

Sometimes more is better. The process is counter intuitive. Severe pruning can lead to excessive growth. Minimal pruning (leave lots of spurs) will produce more bunches and reduce shoot growth. If you observed on your initial walk that the vineyard was very vigorous last year consider a lighter dormant pruning this year. Follow up with some serious shoot thinning in the spring. You may achieve more balance in growth. If the canes were spindly and unhealthy a more severe pruning may revive the vine. This may reduce tonnage this season but pay off with a healthier vine in years to come.

In new vineyards remember that you are pruning for the roots and for the future of the vineyard. A well established root structure will get you through times of severe heat and stress years down the line. It can be a trade off between a big early harvest or well established roots ready for the long run.

While pruning up and down the rows pay attention to the vineyard floor. A winter cover crop will protect the vine rows from erosion and will dry out the soil faster thus allowing easier access. If you have areas that you can't get into because they are too wet make notes to improve drainage and floor management in these spots by next winter.

Look under the vines. **Now is the time get a handle on weed growth**. Knock down the weeds under the vines now so that they don't get established in the first place. There are two options for control: mechanical and chemical. It is completely possible to control the weeds with an in-row tiller or even by hand hoeing on a smaller site. Mulching is a good option. Consider using rice straw as this will not add to the seed bank in the soil. If you must spray do it in January or February while the vines are still dormant. Roundup is a systemic herbicide that will enter the tender growing weed shoots and go down into the

Vine Talk, continued

roots of the weed and kill it completely. Do not use if there is any green growth on the vines or use with extreme caution. This product is not effective against every weed. Stay away from herbicides that leach readily through the soil as the water table is vulnerable to contamination. Consider options carefully especially if you plan to spray. Remember that some weeds are resistant to most chemicals. Mechanical intervention is a viable and effective control treatment that can be cost effective if the timing is right. It is essential to get the weeds knocked down now before they get a chance to establish. Finally take a look around the vineyard and see what you can do to enhance the appearance and biodiversity of the site. There is still time to plant interesting ornamentals that will attract beneficial organisms. The intimate life of the vineyard goes far beyond the canopy and the fruit. The insects and biology that thrive there can contribute to the overall vitality of the vines by eating pests and preventing the establishment of large pest and disease populations that would require heavy sprays. Prevention is key to a vital, productive, premium vineyard. Think ahead. Now is the time.

Have a great year!

Prudy Foxx
Foxx Viticulture
Santa Cruz Mountains

Photos Wanted for the Website

We are always looking for photos to illustrate our website at www.vascm.org, and we would love to receive your photos of your vineyards. We change the photos on our homepage all the time to illustrate the seasons in the vineyard, and will post your photos if you send them. Choose a couple of your best and send them to the webmaster, ed@munsvineyard.com or to Mary at mary@munsvineyard.com.

**Did you know you can find at
www.vascm.org:**

- Sources for supplies: trellising, fertilizer, netting, irrigation, vines, and more
- Consultants / vineyard managers
- Websites for industry resources, pest management, education, etc.
- Information about our appellation, vineyards
- Past issues of newsletter & Vine Talk
- The VASCM 'Exchange' to Buy/Sell grapes, vineyard supplies and services
- Info on sustainability, and our sustainable and organic vineyards

Check out the VASCM Website!

**Santa Cruz Mountains Appellation Wines Scoring
90+ Points in Wine Enthusiast, 2007***

Cabernet Sauvignon

- Martin Ray: **93 points** – 2003 Santa Cruz Mountains

Chardonnay

- Byington: **90 points** – 2004 Chardonnay, Quenneville Vineyard
- Clos la Chance:
90 points – 2004 Biagini Vineyard
90 points – 2004 Liebler Vineyard (\$35) February issue
- Mount Eden: **95 points** – 2003 Estate Chardonnay
- Thomas Fogarty:
95 points - 2004 Chardonnay, Damiana Vineyard
93 points – 2004 Chardonnay, Camel Hill Vineyard
92 points – 2004 Chardonnay, Portola Springs Vineyard
92 points – 2004 Chardonnay, Albutom Vineyard

Pinot Noir:

- Bargetto: **92 points** – 2004 Regan Vineyard
- Clos la Chance: **92 points** – 2004 Pinot Noir, Biagini Vineyard
- Sonnet: **91 points** – 2005 Muns Vineyard
- Thomas Fogarty:
95 points – 2004 Rapley Train Vineyard, M Block
94 points - 2004 Estate-Grown Pinot Noir
93 points – 2004 Rapley Trail Vineyard, B Block
90 points – 2004 Rapley Trail Vineyard

Additional scores (85-89 points):

- Bargetto:
87 points – 2003 Merlot, Regan Vineyard
- Beauregard:
89 points – 2005 Chardonnay, Trout Gulch Vineyard
- Byington:
89 points – 2004 Estate
87 points – 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, Bates Ranch
- Clos la Chance:
89 points – 2005 Pinot Noir, Santa Cruz Mountains
86 points – 2005 Chardonnay, Santa Cruz Mountains
- Martin Alfaro:
86 points – 2005 Deer Park Vineyard
- Thomas Fogarty:
87 points – 2003 Meritage, Camel Hill Vineyard

*May not include all applicable wines; only includes wines submitted to and included in Wine Enthusiast; does not include January and April issues.
Compiled by M. Lindsay

Membership – 2008 Memberships Due

Membership in the VASCM is \$50 annually, payable at the beginning of the calendar year. A membership form is included with this newsletter, and is available online at <http://www.vascm.org>.

Directions to Thomas Fogarty Vineyard for the 2/12 meeting:

Thomas Fogarty Winery is located on the east side of Highway 35 (Skyline Blvd.), 4.5 miles south of Highway 84 (Woodside Rd.) and 2.7 miles north of Page Mill Road. From Highway 280 take the Highway 84 exit (Woodside Road) driving west toward the mountains. Go through the town of Woodside, the road then becomes steep, narrow and winding. Keep heading up the mountain. When you reach the top at the intersection of Highway 35 (Skyline Blvd.) make a sharp left turn onto 35 (Skyline Blvd.). Drive 4.5 miles and the winery is on the left, across the street from the entrance of Yerba Buena Nursery.

A map is at www.fogartywinery.com/contact.html. Phone: 650-851-6777

Officers of the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains:

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The Viticulture Association of the
Santa Cruz Mountains
P.O. Box 8092
Santa Cruz CA 95061-8092

2008 Membership Renewal Enclosed

NEWSLETTER

Next Meeting Feb. 12:
“90+ Point Wines Start in the Vineyard”, at Thomas Fogarty

