



Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Grapevine

May, 2008

VINE TALK

Bloom.

Such a cold spring and yet the grapes press on, stretching out their shoots, greening their abundant buds, enlarging the canopy. The life goal of the grape is to reproduce, so in spite of all adversity it will sacrifice everything to ripen its seed. The flesh surrounding is naught but protection in that endeavor and for us indeed the grape plant's trash is our wine treasure.

This cold spring has in many regions wreaked terrible havoc. In Mendocino and Lake Counties there has been tremendous loss of Chardonnay for the year. Here in Santa Cruz there is spotty reporting of freeze damage. The bad news is that the black shoots will not spawn fruit for this year or if they do it will be a second crop that may ripen sometime around Christmas. The good news is that next year in all likelihood the vines will sprout anew and this year will be filed away as an old memory. If you did suffer freeze damage wait and see if any fruit buds survived and take care of what you have.

If you notice some shoot tips dying off it may not be freeze damage. You may be seeing botrytis or even evidence of wood borers. Look at the base of the shoots for small entry holes. If not, cut the shoot across to see if there is browning in the inner tissue. This could be a sign of disease damage.

Be vigilant for powdery mildew. Though temperatures have been cool the over wintering spores have had ample opportunity to awaken and spawn. Walk your vineyard and look at the underside of the leaves. Watch for the obvious gray and white powder or telltale pinhole spotting that may appear haloed by yellow and then brown rings. The soft downy fuzz that sometimes covers new tissue is not mildew but can be mistaken for it.

If the canopy is especially dense do not hesitate to
(continued next page)

Next Meeting

**June 4, 3:00-5:30: Next VASCM Meeting
"Nutrient Management", at Camel Hill Vineyard, Los Gatos**

Our speaker is Dennis Culver, an ESA Board-certified entomologist, certified crop advisor, and fertilizer expert. He will talk about nutrient management to improve vine health and optimize fruit quality. This includes soil analysis to determine requirements, nutrients and their application (including organic), and monitoring (including leaf analysis). Our host is Jon Anderson. And yes, there are real camels at Camel Hill.

As always, bring a bottle of wine to share for tasting at the end of the meeting. 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

May 16 - Grafting Workshop 10am–noon at Burrell School John Rogers has been working with David Gates since the beginning of the year to put together a grafting workshop for us. The timing has to be just right for the vines, and they are ready. Burrell School is grafting and has been terrific to allow us to do the workshop there. David Gates will take us through the process, and you will have a chance for some hands on practice. You will find out how to prepare your vines for grafting, how to determine the best time to graft, and how to do it. Leather gloves might be helpful to bring. Note: This is a workshop, not a regular meeting.

Thank you to Dave Moulton, Mark Seifert, David Gates and John Rogers.

Burrell School, 24060 Summit Road, Los Gatos
Directions: take Highway 17 to Summit Road and go 3.5 miles east/south from the intersection of Hwy 17 and Summit Rd.

get in there and shoot thin like crazy. Make room for the strong shoots with large buds to mature without encumbrance from their neighbor. Get rid of the skinny weak shoots that struggle with clusters. If you want to preserve the shoot position you might save a debilitated shoot but remove the fruit bud. Give the shoot a chance to put all its energy into reinvigorating the position rather than spend itself coaxing along a cluster that may never properly ripen.

Maintain a consistent spray program and focus on coverage. Many of you know that I am a devotee of JMS Stylet Oil and if it works for you by all means use it. If you have another spray program that historically has worked for you, do that. The point is, get the spray on, get good coverage, and be consistent. Keep the spores at bay, eradicate them if possible or suppress them if nothing else. One of these days it will warm up and the spores lying in wait will explode. The challenge of keeping mildew off the vine will then be escalated exponentially.

The time from bloom to set is critical for powdery mildew control. The vine shoots are rapidly elongating and soft new tissue is formed every day. This newly formed tissue is especially susceptible to mildew infection. This is the reason that a consistent early spray program that emphasizes total coverage is essential. Many of the systemic sprays that are so effective in protecting the canopy after set are less so during this period of rapid growth. The systemic nature of the chemical spray often cannot keep up with the rapidly expanding vulnerable tissue.

If you have the spray program well in hand and your canopy is thinned so that you can see around each shoot, good job. Now take time to look to the vineyard floor and evaluate the weeds. You don't want anything growing up into the canopy. This reduces air flow and increases opportunities for disease infection. Get those weeds down now. It is too late to spray and under-row disking or even hoeing is problematic now because of dust or hard soil. Consider cutting the weeds with a mower or weed whacker. Many weeds will not come back in the summer heat. Either way get the weeds out of your canopy.

Test your drip system and make sure the emitters are clean and running efficiently. Take petiole samples during bloom to identify mineral deficiencies in the vines.

Membership

Membership in the VASCM is \$50 annually, payable at the beginning of the calendar year. If you have not yet paid for 2008, a membership form is included with this newsletter for your convenience.

Walk the vineyard, admire its beauty. Enjoy the beauty of the clover or lupine cover crops if you have them and plan on adding to the biodiversity of your site next year. Inhale deeply the blooms on the grape clusters. This is the sweetest fragrance I know, the most exotic of perfumes. Enjoy this special time and good luck with set.

Buena suerte.

Prudy Foxx
Foxx Viticulture

Wanted & For Sale in the Buy/Sell Exchange

Think ahead to harvest. If you need or have fruit to sell use VASCM's email-based Buy/Sell Exchange to make the connections and secure your arrangements. Established as a mechanism for growers and wineries to connect for the purpose of buying and selling appellation grapes, the Exchange can be used for other wine industry related services and products. Just send your email message to VASCM@kkn.net and everyone on the list will receive it. Listings are also posted to our website at www.VASCM.org.

The following Wanted and For Sale listings have recently gone across the Exchange:

Wanted: Pinot Noir, about 5 tons.
Contact Brandon Armitage, Winemaker, Roudon Smith Brandon@roudonsmith.com

Wanted: 8000 grow tubes. Contact Ryan Beauregard rbwine@gmail.com

For Sale: 2 500+ gallon rectangular, horizontal, double-walled stainless tanks (milk tanks converted to wine storage). 87" long x 60" wide x 36" high; and 87" long x 53" wide x 36" high. \$600.00 each tank
Contact Val Rebhahn, Glenwood Oaks at 831-438-4097, if no answer leave a message for Val by pressing "1" on your phone.



Directions to Camel Hill Vineyard for the 6/4 meeting:

Camel Hill Vineyard
18951 Bear Creek Rd., Los Gatos
Directions: take Hwy. 17 through Los Gatos, exit Bear Creek Rd. at
Lexington Reservoir. Go 1/2 mile up Bear Creek;
Camel Hill is on the right.

**Officers of the Viticulture Association of the
Santa Cruz Mountains:**

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Newsletter



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