



Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Grapevine

March, 2009

VINE TALK

Budbreak!

After a cold wet February the buds are swelling and beginning to open up. That unusual heat spell in January sent some confusing signals to the vines but overall most seem healthy and on track.

Bud break and just after is a crucial time in the vineyard to practice disease management. If you had a severe powdery mildew episode last year then hopefully you were able to apply a dormant lime sulfur spray (there is an organic version of this product) to the wood prior to bud break. If you didn't get around to that, or you couldn't hurdle the Ag. Commissioner's obstacle course of closed system requirements and employee applicators, don't despair.

A second option is to immediately apply JMS Stylet Oil post bud break. The oil acts as an eradicant and will suffocate the spores emerging out of winter dormancy. Like so many problems, if you nip mildew in the bud (literally) you save yourself a year's worth of expense and hassle fighting the disease after its population explodes.

Whether you put a dormant spray on or not, it is absolutely essential to implement an effective and consistent mildew control program in early Spring. This is the most important thing you can do to produce fully mature top quality fruit and have fun getting there.

Other tasks this time of year include getting the weeds under control especially under the vines and cutting down the cover crop. In areas susceptible to frost it is very important to cut down high growth around the vines to prevent frost damage. If you have nitrogen fixing cover crops it

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Next Meeting

March 18 at Vine Hill – Fruit Ripening & Canopy Management 3:00pm.

Our speaker: Stan Grant, viticulture consultant and principal of Progressive Viticulture, will give a presentation on ripening and canopy management for optimum wine grape quality - both directly through canopy specific practices and indirectly through vineyard design and other vineyard practices. Stan addressed the VASCM several years ago when he gave a presentation on research he was doing for CAWG on hangtime, and we have asked him to return to address the broader issues affecting ripening. Stan established and was the Director of Gallo's Viticulture Department, he was the Director of Farming for Duarte Nursery, and he currently consults with vineyards throughout the state.

As well, we are returning to Vine Hill as a follow-up to our cover crop meeting last year. We can see how Vine Hill's cover crop has blossomed, and Rachel Ormes will share her program and results.

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 to Vine Hill on back.*

President's Corner

Santa Cruz Mountains wines, especially Pinot Noir, are taking center stage in March. At World of Pinot Noir last weekend a panel of our local winemakers and viticulturists spoke about the Santa Cruz Mts., the newly-defined subregions, our vineyards and wines. And the last weekend of this month is our own Pinot celebration, Pinot Paradise, March 28-29.

Prudy Foxx, Jim Schultze and John Schumacher have put together a terrific technical program for

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(Vine Talk, cont.)

is best to immediately incorporate them into the soil to ensure maximum benefit from the nitrogen. Sometimes there is a delay of nitrogen availability to the vines as the cover crop breaks down.

Check nitrogen levels in your soil and on previous year's petiole reports to determine if you have a spring nitrogen deficiency in your vineyard. Some labs use standards based on growing Thompson Seedless grapes in the valley. Premium coastal vinifera do not require the same levels of nitrogen. Go by vigor patterns in past years as well as hard data to determine your spring fertility program. Nitrogen provides protein to the vine and is essential to the structural integrity of the vine and the fruit. However, too much can lead to over vigorous vines that shade out the fruit zone and produce inferior fruit or lead to extra work shoot thinning, hedging, and leaf pulling.

Most vineyards need an extra boost of zinc and soluble boron in the Spring prior to flowering. Check past performance in the vineyard and petiole reports from prior years to see if you have had a deficiency. If you don't have data, think back to last year and the cluster formation. If you saw bunches with large and small berries or lots of shot berries you may have a micronutrient deficiency in the vineyard. These problems can be temperature related as well so consider your own circumstances. Use the Boron as a foliar spray with caution as too much is just as bad or worse than too little. Don't be afraid to use it if you need it just watch the rate and follow label recommendations. Zinc is not so sensitive and should be incorporated as a foliar spray in most vineyards in early Spring.

Be sure to take some time to talk with your winemaker about your fruit and adjustments he or she may wish to see. Everyone benefits from a premium product so keep the lines of communication open and your glass full.

Have a great Spring!

Prudy Foxx
Foxx Viticulture
Santa Cruz Mountains

President's Corner, cont.

Pinot Paradise on Sunday the 29th. Two keynote speakers, Joe Miller of UCSC and Clark Smith of Appellation America, plus a group of local vineyardists and winemakers will explore the terroir of the Santa Cruz Mountains and the six newly identified subregions, along with a representative tasting. Whether or not you are growing Pinot, and especially if you are, this will be a valuable educational opportunity to drill down into our own region.

And then of course at the Grand Cruz tasting in the afternoon you will be able to taste virtually all of our appellation Pinot Noirs from 35 wineries.

Spring officially starts next week, we have thankfully had some good rain (finally) this winter, the buds are swelling and we will have budbreak before too long. With everyone's hard work in the vineyards, the talents of our winemakers and nature's gifts we look forward to another wonderful vintage in 2009. I would say we are at the start of another great year (we trust it will be), but really it's all a continuum from the work in the vineyard last year, and the year before. It's a circle, and really never stops.

- Mary Lindsay

More Events

Annual RAVE Conference, March 19, UC Davis Extension. This is a day-long program focused on "Flavor", describing the latest research in both viticulture and enology that impacts flavor. Past programs have been outstanding. Enrollment in RAVE includes a one-year membership in the Trellis Alliance. You can read about RAVE and the Trellis Alliance on the UC Davis Extension web site, http://extension.ucdavis.edu/unit/winemaking/pdf/083_125_rave.pdf.

Pinot Paradise, March 28-29 www.scmwa.com
March 28: Pinot Pathways
March 29: Technical Session and Grand Cruz Tasting at Villa Ragusa conference center, Campbell

ASEV Annual Conference, June 23-26, Napa
Includes a symposium on rootstocks on June 23.
<http://www.asev.org/>

Copies of all of Prudy's Vine Talk columns since 2004 can be found on our website at www.vascm.org.

Pinot Paradise, March 28-29
Tech Session, Sunday, March 29 at Villa
Ragusa, Campbell

Tickets from the SCMWA, www.scmwa.com

Joe Miller, UC Professor, winemaker, world traveler and teacher of extension classes on wines of the world, will take us on a virtual tour of Burgundy, discuss terroir, and compare and contrast to the Santa Cruz Mountains. His intimate knowledge of Burgundy and Santa Cruz Mountains wines and vineyards will set the stage for a meaningful drill-down into the properties of the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA.

Clark Smith, Enologist and Winemaker, director of Best of Appellation Tastings at AppellationAmerica.com, will provide a unique perspective on the new Santa Cruz Mts. subregions. Clark was instrumental in helping to define our subregional profiles, through evaluations of our Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs and Cabernet Sauvignons. Clark will provide a birds-eye view of the entire appellation, pointing out the features of each of the subregions: Skyline, Ben Lomond Mountain, Los Gatos/Saratoga, Santa Cruz Coastal Foothills, Summit, and Corralitos/Pleasant Valley.

Jim Schultze of Windy Oaks will moderate a panel of winemakers from each of the subregions, accompanied by a representative tasting. The panel will conduct an in-depth discussion of the terroir of each of the subregions:

- Corralitos: Steve Storrs, Storrs Winery (Christie Vineyards, Lester Family Vineyards)
- Santa Cruz Coastal Foothills: Sal Godinez, Vine Hill (Raffaelli Vineyard)
- Saratoga/Los Gatos: Jeffrey Patterson, Mt. Eden Vineyards (Estate)
 - Summit: Ed Muns, Muns Vineyard (Estate)
- Skyline: Michael Martella, Thomas Fogarty (Estate vineyards)
- Ryan Beauregard, Beauregard Winery (Estate vineyards)

From the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA):

The CSWA has published a free grower guide, **“Reducing Risks through Sustainable Winegrowing: A Growers’ Guide,”** funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency. The 45-page user-friendly guide demonstrates how adopting sustainable methods reduces risk and can be an effective management strategy to enhance the long-term viability of businesses. The guide is available online at: www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/agrowersguide.php.

SWP Public Participant List

If you are an SWP participant who has submitted self-assessment results to the program and are not on the public list of SWP participants (available at www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/swpparticipants.php) please contact Lisa Francioni at lisa@wineinstitute.org or 415-356-7545.

Upcoming Sustainable Winegrowing Program Self-Assessment Webinars: April 30, May 28, June 25

Visit www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/workshopcalendar.php for details.

2009 Memberships Are Due. Please find a membership form on the website at www.vascm.org

January VASCM Meeting on Pruning at Alfaro Family Vineyards. A big thank you to Richard Alfaro for hosting, and for letting us work on his vines.



Officers of the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains:

President: Mary Lindsay, Muns Vineyard, 408-234-2079, mary@munsvineyard.com

Vice President: Rachel Ormes, 831-427-0436
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Treasurer: Pete Woodruff, 831-728-8661
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Directions to Vine Hill for the 3/18 meeting:

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.winesofvinehill.com



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Newsletter



Next Meeting & Workshop: March 18 -"Ripening & Canopy Management; Cover Crops Part II" at Vine Hill