



Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Grapevine

May, 2009

VINE TALK

Bloom and Set 2009. Another great year springs forth. As usual, nothing is predictable. We have had cold temperatures, light frost, record highs, and back to fog. The wind seems unstoppable some days. It is another year in the life of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The last heat wave drove the shoots to new lengths. Many vineyards are showing vigorous growth with robust buds that promise full succulent clusters of fruit. Now is the time to carefully consider the foliar spray program. The focus is on flowering and fruit set. Other factors such as weeds, gophers, and mildew remain a part of the plan.

Start off by reviewing the vineyard history. If you have a recent petiole or leaf blade analysis review this to spot nutrient deficiencies or imbalances. Pay close attention to the zinc and boron levels. Last year if you noticed an excess of big and little berries in the clusters your vines may have a deficiency of these minerals. Include these micronutrients in your foliar spray program pre bloom if you have the need. Pay special attention to Boron levels as too much can be just as detrimental as too little.

Notice nitrogen levels as well. As much as you do not want to encourage excessive vegetative growth in the vines your vineyard still may need a shot of this important protein source. If you have not taken bloom time tissue samples in the past make a point of doing it this year. Little adjustments can go a long way in proper cluster formation and excellent fruit.

Talk to your winemaker about the chemical analysis of the wine. Discuss how well the fruit went through fermentation. Find out if there were
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Next Meeting

May 12 at Bruzzone's Rancho Don Bosco – WATER. Climate Change. Irrigation scheduling. 2:00pm.

Two speakers will discuss the practical and theoretical issues concerning what is becoming a precious commodity: (despite the late Spring rains) water. Whether or not you irrigate, come to hear Michael Loik, from UCSC's agroecology program, share his research and talk about whether or not we are being affected by climate change, and what it means for our vineyards. UCSC is a terrific resource, and this is the first of what we hope will be more programs working with the university.

2:00: Mark Bettany, UC Davis Extension expert from San Luis Obispo will address irrigation scheduling, deficit irrigation, and reading and using a pressure bomb.

3:00: Michael Loik, UCSC, on climate change and how it might affect vineyards in California and us locally.

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 Bruzzone on back.*

President's Corner: Our Viticultural History

Did you know that at one time (in the 1890's) there was over 12,000 acres of winegrapes in the Santa Clara Valley? A sea of vines stretched from the Almaden Valley through Cupertino and Mt. View and up to Stanford. There was as much as 2000 acres at the end of the 19th century following the railroad route between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz through the Santa Cruz Mountains. Reading Charles Sullivan's history of our local wineries and vineyards, "Like Modern Edens", two things become clear: 1. Up until Prohibition this area dominated the California wine industry; and 2. The Santa Cruz Mountains especially was pivotal in the creation of today's premium wines,
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nutritional issues that may have affected the process. It is not a direct line from fruit to juice analysis and fermentation but there are definite correlations that bear scrutiny. Work together and taste the fruit of your labor!

Canopy management is the other big focus at this time. Shoot thinning is often a good idea. It opens up the canopy and allows for air flow, banded lighting, and spray penetration. Give the healthy shoots with good looking buds space to develop without being crowded up against water shoots and weaker tissue. Favor the shoots that grow out of buds from spurs chosen during winter pruning. Generally the basal buds are less fruitful. It should be obvious at this point where the fruit is forming. Retain shoots with healthy clusters in favorable upright growth positions. It is also a good idea to keep a few shoots that grow from the cordon or lower on the spur even if these don't have fruit. This will give you options for next year and help prevent the problem of "spur creep" (where the spurs get too tall).

Get your spray program on schedule. The Davis IPM program has contributed greatly to wine grape production with their powdery mildew model based on weather conditions. This model really helps to improve efficiency of the spray program but it does not replace it. Powdery mildew is very difficult to see this time of year. It usually does not show as a white powder now unless you have an infection that is really advanced. More likely any mildew spores on the grapes are still in the early stages of population explosion. Get sprays on early to ensure complete coverage. I favor the sprays that eradicate mildew (JMS Stylet Oil) over those that suppress it (sulfur). Systemic sprays used at this time may not be able to keep up with the rapid tissue expansion. There are many new organic options on the market and with good canopy management and favorable weather these can be effective. This is a decision you will have to make for yourself. What is important is to open up the canopy and get a spray on to prevent mildew from establishing or expanding in the vineyard before you see it. Do not wait for fruit set for the white powder to show on your fruit. By then it will be too late and though you may reduce the problem you will never completely overcome it in the same year once established.

Finally seek out your winemaker and congratulate them on a job well done. The wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains get better every year and we are really making a splash on the pages of journalism and in wine competitions everywhere. Thank you

to everyone for contributing to our growing success!

In the words of Nicolas Joy: Keep going!
Buena suerte.

Prudy Foxx
Foxx Viticulture
Santa Cruz Mountains

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

More Events

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

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: 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

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through improved viticultural and winemaking techniques, and emphasis on premium winegrapes and wines.

Antoine Delmas introduced sulfur to fight powdery mildew. Charles Lefranc grafted French buds onto native *Vitis californica* vines found in profusion along Guadalupe Creek. Paul Masson brought in Chardonnay and Pinot from France and grafted it to phylloxera resistant *Rupestris* St. George rootstock (AxR1), which worked at the time but in more recent years succumbed. Pierre Klein and his vineyard at Jimsomare on Montebello, and Emmett Rixford from his La Questa vineyard in Woodside established the world-class reputation for wines from the *Chaine d'Or*. The Picchetti Winery, founded in the late 1800's, still stands today. The Los Gatos Cooperative Winery, in downtown Los Gatos, built in 1886, was making 300,000 gallons of wine by 1889, with much of the fruit coming out of the mountains. At the same time, the Los Gatos-Saratoga Winery down the road was making 120,000 gallons (and 350,000 by the turn of the century). The Novitiate farmed as much as 135 acres between its vineyards in Los Gatos and in the Almaden Valley. During Prohibition local vineyards shipped almost 30,000 (train) carloads of winegrapes to the east coast. John Bargetto started up his winery in Soquel. Martin Ray pushed for the establishment of appellations; to increase the percentage of varietal juice (which had been only 51%); and to abolish the use of grape concentrates (popular during Prohibition as a solution to shipping fruit that could and often did rot en route) - all of which came to pass.

Lots of factors have changed the local wine industry, not the least of which have been economic ups and downs over the years; ups and downs and changes in market demand; World Wars; Prohibition; phylloxera; and suburbanization. But one thing has largely remained the same, and that is the drive of our Santa Cruz Mountains vineyards and wineries to grow and produce high quality, premium winegrapes and wines that can compete on the world stage.

This is our long, colorful, and inspiring history. The Forbes Mill History Museum in Los Gatos is dedicating an exhibit to the history of our vineyards and wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains and Santa Clara Valley. It will have a preview in time for Vintners Festival June 13-14, with the grand opening scheduled for July 19. The Museum is looking for memorabilia and photographs, etc. If you have something that you can provide on loan to the Museum through the

end of the year, you can let me know, or contact the Museum's director, Elke Grove, at 408.395.7386. This exhibit can be an excellent one and worthy of our impressive history if we help make it so.

- Mary Lindsay



Grapes are hand-picked at the Paul Masson Mountain Winery in Saratoga, Ca.

Applications are due June 1 for the annual **Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award Program**, administered by the California Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resources Agency, in partnership with the Department of Food and Agriculture, etc. The Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award recognizes individuals, organizations, and businesses that have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made notable, voluntary contributions in conserving California's resources and protecting and enhancing our environment. Categories include: Climate Change (reducing greenhouse gas emissions); Ecosystem and Watershed Stewardship; Sustainable Practices, etc. If you are interested in applying or submitting a nomination, more information is available at <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Awards/GEELA/>

Directions to Bruzzone's Rancho Don Bosco

for the 5/12 meeting:

Location: Bruzzone Family Vineyards, Rancho Don Bosco, 1690 Glen Cyn. Rd., Scotts Valley.

Please note: this address is not the winery address.

To reach Rancho Don Bosco (*From Highway 17*):

Exit Mt. Hermon Rd.

Right on Glen Cyn. and continue on Glen Cyn. under the highway for about 1.5 miles to Rancho Don Bosco on the left.

You will see a white picket fence surrounding a Chardonnay vineyard, a pond, and a large gate at the entrance to the property.

Officers of the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains:

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

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Newsletter



Next Meeting: May 12 - "Climate Change. Water. Irrigation Scheduling." At Bruzzone's Rancho Don Bosco