



Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Grapevine

June, 2010

VINE TALK

Fruit set 2010. After a prolonged cold and wet spring, summer has burst upon us just in time for bloom and set. The sun came out with the flowers of the 2010 vintage providing near perfect conditions for a quick and full set in many vineyards of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from sea to sky. The Syrah, Cabernet and other varieties are setting just behind. Though most vineyards started the season two to three weeks behind they are fast catching up. It will depend on heat units for the rest of summer to see how much crop can mature and when.

During the wet part of early spring, when the vegetative growth was exploding all over our region many vineyards would have been well served to practice shoot thinning. This practice keeps air flowing in the canopy and will suppress the eager botrytis spores from infecting the young flower buds and rotting them off. Proper winter pruning will have provided some protection from overcrowded shoots but the excessive soil moisture this year may have promoted excessive vigor on many sites.

It is best to refrain from significant activity in the vineyard during actual flowering and set. This is a special time in the vineyard when air and insect born pollen will dust the flowers and produce the crop for our next vintage. The grower's job is to provide ideal conditions for this special process. These conditions include space and airflow around the clusters and a dry inner canopy protected from extreme weather influence.

However it is also the most susceptible time in canopy and cluster development for disease infection. Conditions are often ideal during bloom and set for powdery mildew and botrytis infection. It is essential to maintain a tight spray program during this delicate time to protect your vines and fruit against these destructive maladies. Do not hesitate to spray during bloom. If the spray is formulated correctly average spray pressure will not knock the delicate buds off of the vines unless they are already damaged from disease. Instead it will protect them.

Bloom is the time to take tissue samples of the vineyard. This practice will provide the information you need to go forward through the season with a proper fertilization program. Most labs are set up to take samples at this time.

Next Meeting

Biopesticides and Pests Update July 1, 2:00pm at Muns Vineyard

(directions on the back)

Speakers: Jesse Rosales of Marrone BioInnovations, and Larry Bettiga, Farm Advisor for UC Davis Cooperative Extension.

Jesse Rosales will speak about the relatively new and growing use of biopesticides. These are naturally occurring substances in demand for their value in IPM programs to enhance yields and quality along with their low impact on the environment. He will talk about what they are, the benefits and barriers, application, and use for disease and weed control. Marrone BioInnovations produces Regalia and GreenMatch. You can see more information on their website at marronebioinnovations.com (PCA, CCA and Applicator credits are available through an online course on the Marrone website. Come to the meeting and get an introduction to the course, then take the test on the website at marronebioinnovations.com/biopesticides/.)

Larry Bettiga will bring us up to date on vineyard pests, specifically the spread and status of the LBAM and European Grapevine Moth.

As well, we will conduct elections for this year's Board of Directors. The current Board members are up for re-election and are willing to continue in their positions, and additional nominations will be taken from the floor. All interested parties are welcome to run.

Our next meeting in August: the annual bbq. More info will be forthcoming.

President's Corner

I'm going to keep this short and sweet, as the newsletter needs to get in the mail if you're going to get it before the meeting! It is going to be touch and go for some people if the mail takes more than a day or two. Most of you are on the email list and received the meeting notice a week+ ago. If you did not receive the email notice and you have email, please let us know your address. This is the fastest way to be notified of meetings and news.

Vine Talk, cont.

Results are compared with standards used throughout the industry to make fertilization choices. Nitrate and nitrogen levels tend to fluctuate the most. Be sure to evaluate growth when reviewing the lab results. If the lab numbers do not compare with what you are seeing in the vineyard you may want to repeat the test and follow the pattern of nitrogen use in your vineyard. Many of the lab standards are based on Thompson Seedless grapes in the Central Valley and do not directly correlate to the needs of your vines. Petiole or leaf blade samples taken consistently at the same time over a series of years and then compared with harvest numbers will provide you the best guide for fertility management in your vineyard. Consult your lab for direction on sampling protocol. The consistent practice of tissue sampling will directly lead to improved vine performance and quality of wine. Contrary to popular belief a starved and tortured vine does not always produce the best fruit.

Post set is an excellent time to supplement the vines with needed nutrition. Fertigation through the drip lines is the easiest and most efficient way to add nutrients to the vines. If your vineyard is not set up for this you will have to rely on foliar supplements. You may also need to adjust your winter and early spring soil amendment program. Putting dry material on the ground now is inefficient as the material cannot be absorbed into dry soil.

Post fruit set is the also the time to go in for another round of canopy management. The practice of leaf pulling around the fruit clusters is highly dependent on site. Warmer sites with less vigorous growth may not require any leaf pulling at all. Cooler sites, especially where heavy wet morning fog is a factor will probably benefit. If you choose to proceed with leaf pulling after set, stay on the morning sun side of the vineyard. If your rows are planted east west choose to pull leaves from the north side of the canopy. Maintain at least one layer of leaves to protect fruit from the punishing rays of the afternoon sun beaming down from the south horizon of the sky. Pull leaves from underneath the fruit and inside the canopy. Unless your vineyard has tremendous vigor resist the urge to pull leaves much above the fruit. The goal is airflow and variegated light, not open exposure. Remove weak and crowded shoots at the same time.

Finally get rid of the rest of those pesky weeds. The spring rains encouraged a tremendous flush of unwanted growth under the canopy and many people have had to go in several times to keep growth down. Use weed eaters, mechanical tillage and even hoes to knock down growth at this time. Do not use herbicides as they can threaten the vines this time of year. It is essential to maintain good airflow within and under the canopy for healthy fruit maturation.

Go after those gophers in your spare time. This is a busy part of the year. Enjoy its beauty as well.

Good luck!
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.

(President's Corner, cont. from page one)

We are doing the best we can, but sometimes the newsletter runs a little late. So get on the email list!

Please note that we will conduct our annual elections for the Board at this meeting. Current Board members are interested to continue; and additional nominations will be taken from the floor. All interested parties are welcome to run. And, we encourage anyone interested to help in any way to speak to a Board member and volunteer in whatever capacity you might be available. This is a volunteer organization, and your help is welcome.

One such volunteer is Suzanne Purnell, who has now written several wonderful Vineyard Profiles for the newsletter – including the one in this issue on Woodruff Family Vineyard. I hope everyone is enjoying learning more about some of our members and their vineyards.

Here is to an excellent 2010 vintage.

Mary Lindsay
President, VASCM

Vineyard Profile: Woodruff Family Vineyard

- by Suzanne Purnell

As I drove up the lane leading to Woodruff Family Vineyard, my first impressions were, "What a pristine, pretty hillside vineyard. Why, I could be in Tuscany!" However, I wasn't in Tuscany, but in a lovely Corralitos valley in springtime.

Owners Barb and Pete Woodruff were charmed by the view and 24 acres of land that went with the house when they first discovered the property one hot fall day in 2003. They had driven from Carmel, leisurely exploring and seeking a property on which to retire that offered space, quiet serenity and surrounding beauty.

By October, they purchased the property and thought the 20plus-year-old vineyard was merely a "bonus" to the property and that having a vineyard was "romantic". They would later find out from other local vineyard owners who had considered buying it that the vineyard broadcast a loud "too much work" message to the informed viticulturists. But, with no farming or viticulture experience, the Woodruffs were happily naïve to the monstrous amount of work the fallow vineyard held in store for them. There was a steep learning curve ahead.

History of the vineyard

The 7.5-acre vineyard was planted around 1978 by Michael Matteson. There are four acres of pinot noir, 3.5 acres of chardonnay and a quarter-acre of gewürztraminer. The four acres of pinot noir are thought to be the first such planting of pinot vines in the Corralitos area.

Ken Burnap, proprietor of Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard during the 1980s and 1990s bought Matteson's excellent quality pinot grapes. Burnap's winemaker/apprentice was a young Jeff Emery.

Al Ciardella bought the vineyard in 1997 and renamed it Ciardella Vineyard. Ciardella had an entirely different philosophy about viticulture. He believed the vineyard could be shared with the deer and birds, so he tore down the deer fence and did not net the vines near harvest. Mr. Ciardella died in 2002 shortly after the harvest was complete. Despite the relative lack of care in the late 90's, the courageous vineyard continued to produce award winning wines, made under the Hallcrest label.

Woodruff Family Vineyard

By the time the Woodruffs purchased the vineyard, it had been untended for over a year and was in poor condition. Not to be daunted by a significant challenge, Barb and Pete set to work in the fall of 2003 as newbie viticulturists. They quickly discovered the vineyard know-how they sought was available from VASCM and hands-on expertise from consultant Prudy Foxx. They also attended courses in viticulture at U.C. Davis.

The retired college speech instructor (Barb) and retired city government finance director/city clerk (Pete) learned the back-breaking labor of pulling weeds, berry vines, and poison oak from the vineyard floor and de-suckering and correcting the pruning. (They told me it took "forever" and that everyone thought they would quit that first year.)

Their hard work, a new deer fence, and a new trellis system in the pinot vines began to bring the vineyard back. The Woodruff's also became more familiar with the particular microclimate of the vineyard and used the VASCM meetings and trainings to full advantage in improving farming practices. They also learned from bad experiences such as the bird invasion the second year that decimated the chardonnay crop, debunking the myth that birds would not attack light colored grapes, and resulting in the netting of all vines in future years.

While both Barb and Pete love working out-of-doors, they realized early on that they would need to hire crews of

workers to get their vineyard back in shape. On weekends, friends would come to help in the vineyard...at least in the beginning!

For the first five years of ownership, Barb and Pete managed most of the farming themselves. A few years ago, they entered into an agreement with Brian Wilkerson (owner of Aptos Creek Vineyard) and Kenny Likitprakong of Hobo Wines to take over the vineyard farming. (I highly recommend www.hobowines.com for a fun read.) Even with the new agreement, the Woodruffs are both still actively involved in the vineyard, consulting with the partners about what needs done and performing all tractor driving.

Viticulture Practices

Except for the light use of Round-Up®, the vines receive sustainable, organic care. The vineyard is dry-farmed and the soil is sandy, rocky, light loam at an elevation of 400 feet. The Woodruffs use liquid kelp as an organic tea spray, Stylet Oil® for mildew control and "green manure" for fertilizer. Their cover crops of clover, barley and bell beans are the fodder for their "green manure". As mildew pressure is very high they focus on canopy management, maintaining dappled light and air movement through thinning, leaf pulling, and some hedging.

Due to the hillside location and the amount of rainfall, soil erosion is an important concern. The Woodruffs gained needed expertise from VASCM guest-speaker Rich Casale and have an EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) agreement for erosion control. Extensive plantings on all terrace sites control erosion and the Woodruffs would like, in the future, to catch their rainfall to reduce erosion and also use it to water their erosion-prevention plants.

With the ocean fairly close and a sunny, warm exposure, the vineyard experiences a late harvest, usually between the second to fourth week in October. Challenges are mildew, bunch rot in the chardonnay, gophers and birds. Yields are 7-8 tons of pinot, 3-5 tons of chardonnay and a half-ton of gewürztraminer.

The Wine

The pinot and chardonnay grapes are currently sold to Big Basin Vineyards, Wind Gap Winery, and Hobo Wine Company. Older vintages went to Storrs Winery, Stefania Winery, Pax Winery, Hallcrest Vineyards, Sycamore Creek Winery, Arista Winery, Salamandre Wine Cellars, Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard and Thunder Mountain Vineyard. Over the years, many medals and awards have been won. In 2009 the pinot made from the vineyard grapes of 2005 captured best in show at the Santa Cruz County Fair.

The Woodruffs are justifiably proud of their vineyard. Their pride reminds me of the satisfaction people experience when they refurbish an old house or a vintage car back to its former glory. In this case, though, I believe their vineyard has achieved its former glory and then surpassed it.



Woodruff Family Vineyard

Directions to Muns Vineyard for the July 1 meeting:

From Hwy 17:

1. Head southeast on Summit Rd.
2. Follow Summit Rd. for 3.3 miles.
3. Left onto Loma Prieta Ave. just past Burrell School.
4. Follow Loma Prieta Ave 3.2 miles, up the hill, through pear orchards, and the last house you will see is at an s-curve in the road that closely hugs the house and garden there. Continue up the hill. Please drive slowly and carefully.
5. At 3.2 miles, the road will split. Continue straight ahead, up the hill (up the 'left' fork of the split) onto the private road.
6. Drive .2 miles. The road will split again; turn right and onto a gravel drive. Continue on to and through the gate. 10mph please to keep down the dust. Park along the drive just inside the gate.

From Hwy 1: Take the Bay/Porter Street exit north (Porter becomes San Jose-Soque Rd.)

Left on Summit Rd.

Right on Loma Prieta Ave. just before Burrell School.

Continue with the directions above.

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: July 1 on Pests and BioPesticides
With speakers Jesse Rosales of Marrone BioInnovations,
And Larry Bettiga, UCCE Farm Advisor**