

Post harvest 2009.

For most of us harvest is long gone and the fruit of 2009 is either pressed off and in barrel or tank or close to it. 2009 has been a year of contrasts. Bloom time varied from hot spikes to cold wet rain and perfect temperatures in between. The timing of bloom as well as grape variety in your vineyard had an enormous influence on the set and quality of the crop this year.

The year was quite productive despite seasonal anomalies. It was a year to expect the unexpected. Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs came in with exceptional flavor and a perfect balance. Many growers and winemakers alike are delighted at the quality and potential of the 09 vintage in the early ripening varieties.

Some vineyards reported bouts with July powdery mildew infestation and a botrytis. If this happened to you take action this winter. Plan to apply a dormant spray of lime sulfur if possible on your vines. Lime sulfur can be purchased as an organic product. Read the label directions carefully for proper use. This application will effectively contribute to the reduction of detrimental organisms in the spring.

The October storm brought as much as 10 inches of water to many vineyards. This reduced the need for post harvest irrigation though this practice is still a good idea. If you have any green canopy left the vines can still uptake nutrients amended through the drip system or put on the ground. If you had severe set or ripening problems not related to the weather review the nutritional status of your vines and feed them as necessary. Consider putting compost under the vines in late winter to enhance soil biodiversity. Arrange for that compost in advance to ensure quality.

Notice the weed growth under the vines. Keep weed growth in check. Propane flaming post rain is an excellent organic way to maintain low growth without exposing a new seed bank. Never allow weeds to flower or seed if possible. It is getting a little late for cover crop planting but certain seeds can still be quite viable. Barley is an excellent choice for mandatory erosion control because it germinates in cooler temperatures and establishes quickly. Bell beans and other nitrogen fixing crops can be sensitive to cold temperatures so explore your options carefully before going forward.

Review the calendar and establish the pattern for your vineyard as to when to expect bloom, set and harvest. Now is the time to reflect on the year and notice what works and what doesn't. Put vineyard records together, enjoy your accomplishments and dream of vintages to come.

Talk to your winemakers. Enjoy the fall colors. Walk your vineyard and share its beauty with friends. Take notice of broken wires, rotted posts and other structural defects. Post winter pruning is a good time to make those repairs. Plan now, update the vineyard map, and get the materials you need together so the job will go smoothly when the time is right.. Enjoy a glass from an earlier vintage for inspiration.

Make the most of the magic of the season and take the time to care for your self. The vineyard needs you!

Prudy Foxx
Foxx Viticulture
Santa Cruz Mountains