



Yes I know, we've not even caught our breath yet, grapes still need to be picked, the fermentation is just started ... but this month sets the stage for next year's foliage growth and fruit set. Get started now to lock in a great 2018. If you have grapes that are not picked yet, remember: don't judge harvest purely by the Brix measurement. It is easy but does not always indicate optimum maturity. Look for acid, seed color, skin texture and tannin composition also.

Post Harvest Watering

Soon after your grapes are harvested they need a deep watering. They are about to transfer leaf carbohydrates to the trunk and root system. They cannot do the transfer if the leaves dry out and die too soon. And they cannot do the transfer if there is no water in the system to carry the sugars.

Next year the grape vine will not start creating new energy until 4 or 5 leaves have emerged. A lot of activity happens in the plant before it reaches the 5 leaf stage. All of the early growth is fueled by the stored carbohydrates in the roots and trunk from this year. Do the correct work now and get off to a great start next year.

Root Growth and Fertilizer

Last week Dr Larry Palmer, of Westbridge Agricultural in Vista, spoke at the September RVVA meeting. He touched on so many important aspects of grapevine physiology that I can't begin to do it justice. One point he did make was directly related to the October chores in the vineyard.

As the vine transfers sugars down into the roots, the roots go through an intense period of growth. It is important to get the correct nutrition into the plant for this growth. Westbridge recommends a Biolink application with Trigger and micronutrients added. It can be applied through foliar spray or ground application. Even though grapevines don't need a lot of nitrogen fertilizer, this root growth uses the amino acids in Trigger to generate growth hormones which will be used in the spring.

Preparing for Dormancy

Don't leave the water on too long after harvest. One of Ramona's "problems", for grapevines if not humans, is the mild winter we usually have. If we maintain the foliage on the plants through the end of December, they may never go dormant. By January we'll surely have a warm spell - false spring. The grapes may start bud break without losing last year's leaves.

Cutting off water helps the plants figure out that dormancy is possible and useful.