



Now is the time to hit the ground running, things begin to happen quickly in the vineyard. Spring comes sooner than you expect and certainly sooner than you want. January will be your last chance to get ahead of the calendar.

The Irrigation System

No irrigation system is good enough to replace deep winter rains. We needed rain and we needed it the last two months.

A week ago the Union Tribune had an interesting article about Southern California climate this year. They said that we basically depend on 5 to 6 weather events a year to replenish our groundwater. We have already missed two of those events - they are not coming back! Even a terrific January and February will not recover what was lost. We need to avoid the continuing depletion of the water supply 3 to 10 feet below the surface.

I am going to start watering right now. I agree with Chip Splinter's comments yesterday: 'use drip irrigation to simulate a good rainfall since nothing has happened so far'. We won't be able to get the good salt-removing soak we would have liked, but we can get some moisture around the roots which are starting to get ready for bud break already. Fortunately, last year we had enough deep rains that the salt deposits were moved away from the roots for awhile.

Weed Control

If we don't get rain in the next month we'll have to reconsider pre-emergent weed control. Without rain, the cover crop will not develop. However, weeds will want to grow in the rows as soon as we start doing drip irrigation. We still need to control those weeds. You can hoe, till or mow with a weed whacker. I prefer to use pre-emergent weed control. The label instructions for pre-emergents list Feb 12 as the last day to apply them for grapes. If you can, spray your rows a day before there is at least 1/4 inch of rain to soak the chemicals into the ground.

Dormant Sprays

If you had trouble with powdery mildew last year you **MUST** consider dormant sprays during January. There are two ways to go: Lime Sulfur or Sylet Oil. Both are effective.

You should spray Lime Sulfur right away, it is effective in knocking off mildew spores that are overwintering on the canes and trunks. Lime Sulfur is very caustic, you'll need to thoroughly clean everything it touches after use. Take the personal protective equipment (PPE) warnings **VERY** seriously. It splashes a lot when poured into the sprayer, you don't want it on your face, hands or in your eyes. You don't want overspray on your clothes or the shoes you wear into the house! By the way, it smells like really bad rotten eggs. Lime Sulfur is \$24 for 2 1/2 gallons at Grangettos ... and the application rate is 4 - 10 gallons per acre; Not cheap !

I will only use Lime Sulfur on the one block in my vineyard that is severely affected by mildew.

Stylet Oil or equivalent is also effective. You want to apply three courses of oil during dormancy, finishing up just before bud break.




























Squirrels (all squirrels must die)

At last year's February general meeting Gary Brennan (Biological Science Technician, US Department of Agriculture) told us all about squirrels. Now, in January they are just starting to come out of hibernation and get ready for breeding. They'll be looking for green vegetation to eat, without rain there isn't a lot around. Watch out for your gardens, and take advantage of their habits by using green vegetative baits in your traps.




January is also a good time to use fumigation techniques. Get out those carbon monoxide spewing gasoline engines and get started !

from Gary Brennan's slides (Gary's entire presentation is on the RVVA web site in Member Resources) :

Management Method Efficacy | California Ground Squirrels

	Time of Year	Efficacy	Cost	Labor	Restrictions
Fumigation	Mid-Jan to Mid-May ¹	HIGH			 ²
Toxic Baits	Mid-May to Mid-Oct	HIGH			 ²
Trapping	Mid-Jan to Mid-Oct	MODERATE			
Burrow modification	Year-round	MODERATE			
Shooting	Mid-Jan to Mid-Oct	MODERATE			
Repellents	Mid-Jan to Mid-Oct	LOW			
Habitat modification	Year-round	LOW			
Biological control	Mid-Jan to Mid-Oct	LOW			
Exclusion	Mid-Jan to Mid-Oct	LOW			

¹ Management window may be longer if high soil moisture persists, particularly following substantial irrigation.
² Dependent on which fumigant or bait is used.

 = Low
 = Moderate
 = High

Replacement Plants or Cuttings

Plan now for the 2018/2019 transplanting season. If you have a "no cuttings" contract with your nursery, work with them to keep your nursery row populated. I suspect that the fires in Napa & Sonoma this year will create a lot of pressure on the nurseries. We may have a hard time getting small orders of vines in a timely manner, on the rootstocks we need. Talk to them as soon as you can.

If you like to use cuttings, this month is a good time to get them in the ground. Use rooting hormones and consistent water to get them started. I find that two cuttings in each location give better results .