



Harvest is not finished, but we can see the end line. The fermentation is just started. This month sets the stage for next year's foliage growth and fruit set. Get started now to lock in a great 2019. Last winter we had essentially zero winter rains, that set us back this year and helped make this a very challenging harvest.

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.

Remember: these are my thoughts and what I do in the vineyard. If you have better ideas, please respond with additional information!

Bill Schweitzer, Oct 5, 2018

Rain During Harvest

This week we had a brief rain shower in the middle of harvest. It wasn't enough to affect grape chemistry, but it certainly moistened the grape clusters when they are tight and hospitable to mold. Luckily a lot of the remaining crop is scheduled to be picked by this weekend. If you have grapes that will hang past Sunday, as I do, it is a good idea to treat them with as good of a botrytis suppressor as you harvest schedule allows. Remember, don't spray Luna or Pristine within two weeks of harvest. Elevate is available for zero-days pre-harvest and very effective. It is, however, priced about \$45 per acre. Stylet oil is slightly less effective but inexpensive.

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 year 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. The amounts recommended per acre are:

- Trigger - 8 ounces
- BioLink Cal Plus - 1 quart
- BioLink 3-3-3 Fertilizer - 1 quart
- BioLink Micronutrient Fertilizer - 1 quart

It can be applied through foliar spray or ground application (twice as much is needed for ground application). Even though grapevines don't need a lot of nitrogen fertilizer, this root growth uses the amino acids in this blend 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.

Reporting Harvest Results

One of the things we can all do in October is report on the results of harvest. The main reason we want to do this is the cumulative effect of the grape and wine industry in the county. We don't really need details of your individual site, but we need the accumulation of all the data when we make a case to the Farm Bureau or County Government on the importance of what we have started here in the Ramona AVA. The County Ag Department collects this information from all the farmers who have an "Operator ID". We can extract a decent estimate from their results.

It seems like this year there has been some great quality but not a lot of quantity. Some of us had blocks of nothing coming out of the vineyards. I think we could all learn more from the misses than the hits this year. We saw that terrible two day heat wave in early July. Those of us who had the combination of 115+ degrees, low humidity and constant wind were severely impacted. We've learned something new to watch for in the future.

We only go through one session of grape growing and winemaking per year. That's not much of a lifelong experience. Sharing between all of us enhances and multiplies that experience - it makes us all better faster.

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