



## Pre-Pruning

Many of us like to pre-prune the vines, starting in December & January. As soon as the leaves are mostly off your vineyard you can cut off all but the lowest 7-8 buds. That's usually about 12" of cane from last year's growth. We choose that length for two reasons. One, it makes it easier to see the final pruning decisions that need to be done quickly later in the spring. And two, early bud break always happens on the 2 highest buds on the cane. Too early bud break will need to be cut off and may actually be frozen off if we get a rare hard frost in February or March. You don't want those sacrificed buds to be the ones that should have born fruit next year.

When spring comes sooner than you expect - and it will - you will suddenly be faced with bud break, new leaves and a partially pruned vineyard. The jungle of last year's growth will visually impair your decisions and every cane will have monstrous tendrils holding on to all the wires. You'll need to work quickly but the vines will not want to get out of your way. Everything you can do now during pre-pruning will speed the process in April.

## The Irrigation System

It looks like this year we have enough rain to avoid drip irrigation for awhile. I love the weekly or two-week intervals between moderate rain events. Hopefully we'll keep this up for awhile.

## Weed Control

Weeds will want to grow in the rows as we get more rain. The intra-row areas are great for ground cover that reduces the erosion and softens the impact of rain and sunshine on the soil. We need to control the weeds under the vines. 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 Sulfur 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.

Stylect 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 2017'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. 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 <sup>1</sup>	HIGH			 <sup>2</sup>
Toxic Baits	Mid-May to Mid-Oct	HIGH			 <sup>2</sup>
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			

<sup>1</sup> Management window may be longer if high soil moisture persists, particularly following substantial irrigation.

<sup>2</sup> 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 these last two years 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.