



Nebraska VineLines

UNIVERSITY OF
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University of Nebraska Viticulture Program

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EARLY SUMMER VINEYARD TASKS

As spring moves into summer, it is important to remain vigilant and persevering with vineyard management tasks. Although it might be tempting to sit on the veranda and sip one or more of those great Nebraska summer wines (Edelweiss, one of the many lovely “blushes”, Lacrosse, Traminette and Brianna, to name a few) and contemplate the meaning of life (it’s a great life here in this paradise we call Nebraska!), it is critical to follow your vines as carefully as at other times of the year. In particular:

1. Walk your vineyard rows and monitor for insect and disease problems. Remember, a hornworm can strip a cane of all green vegetation overnight.
2. If insect or disease problems are apparent, follow recommendations found in the Midwest Commercial Small Fruit and Grape Spray Guide.
3. Provide irrigation as needed, especially in dryer areas of the state. Avoid excessive irrigation.
4. Discontinue fertilization with nitrogen and potassium. Excess vegetative growth is encouraged by excess nitrogen and excess moisture.
5. Evaluate your vines for obvious symptoms of micronutrient deficiencies, especially if your vineyard site is on soils of high pH. Correct by application of appropriate foliar micronutrient sprays.
6. Continue weed control measures. Weeds compete with the vines for water and nutrients.
7. Canopy management. Remember Richard Smart’s admonition that our goal is to turn the light energy of the sun into chemical energy via photosynthesis, that is, turn “Sunlight into Wine”. This requires good fruit and leaf exposure. When leaves shade each other, very little light strikes the lower (shaded) leaf, so minimal

photosynthesis takes place. Ideally, the flower/fruit clusters have been exposed to light since fruit set, thus avoiding sunscald problems.

8. Consider taking petiole samples at veraison for tissue analysis by an appropriate laboratory. It will still not be too late for correcting micronutrient deficiencies, but major nutrient problems (nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus) will need to be addressed with your next year’s fertilizer program.
9. Evaluate potential crop load. Is it predicted to be at or near desired yield levels? Count clusters on several vines for a given cultivar, multiply the average cluster number by the number of vines per acre and then multiply that number by the average weight per cluster for that cultivar based upon records for that vineyard.
10. **Keep good records.** As you approach harvest, be sure that you have all necessary harvest equipment clean and ready, including a scale to determine cluster weights.

EARLY SPRING, BUT NO SERIOUS LATE COLD TEMPERATURE EVENTS – WOW!

When we experience early bud break, as has been the case for many Nebraska vineyards in this spring of 2024, we hold our breath, waiting for the “other shoe to fall”, i.e. a late cold temperature event, causing Nature’s freeze dryer to kick in and kill the newly grown shoots and early foliage. However, for most, if not all, based upon vineyard visits and discussions with many growers, the 2024 vintage is off to a great start with little to no damage. Now if we can escape other environmental dangers (hail, extremes of heat and precipitation, herbicide drift), the 2024 vintage should be another great one for Nebraska vineyards and wineries.

What else has been happening?

- The Eastern Winery Exposition took place in Syracuse, New York where Paul Read presented the opening lecture for the VE 01 session where he presented the preliminary results of the University of Nebraska Program's research on the impact of crop reduction on wine quality. Based upon these early results with Itasca, Frontenac, Frontenac Gris and La Crescent, there appears to be little to be gained in terms of wine quality and characteristics by reducing the size of the crop. Paul's PowerPoint presentation will soon be available on the UNVP website: <https://viticulture.unl.edu>
- Pruning workshop, Capitol View Winery, March 30, 2024. Attendees learned the whys and wherefores of pruning grapevines, including timing, bud selection, removal of damaged or diseased cordons and canes, the potential value of long pruning and adapting to different trellis systems. A selection of pruning tools was demonstrated and discussed including a newer version of a light-weight battery-powered hand pruner. An additional highlight of the morning was a visit to the UNVP vinifera high tunnel project. We are cautiously optimistic about this project where we have demonstrated that there are both "losers" (Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Tannat) and potential "winners" (Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Chambourcin). More details will be forthcoming as the growing season progresses.
- Spring UNVP/NWGGGA Field Day at Miletta Vista Winery, April 27, 2024. The theme of the day was "Retooling your Vineyard". The history of Miletta Vista Winery was part of the introduction by Mick McDowell, co-owner and winemaker, including the "rising from the ashes" following the 2012 fire. Topics included vine spacing, line posts, end posts, end post anchors, trellis systems and vineyard "regeneration". Mick indicated his preference for 11 feet between rows and six feet between plants in the row. This is the direction of his vineyard regeneration and his choice for new plantings. He also has a preference for high wire systems with a post by each plant, employing the Perma strong wood post (1.5"x1.5"x7.5') with which he has had excellent results. A highlight of the field day was the discussions led by Ed Swanson who opened the first post-Prohibition winery in Nebraska, is currently the winemaker for Capitol View Winery, and who now is focused on breeding grapes for Midwest conditions. Miletta Vista has been testing two of his new grapes, Merchette and 10-W-14, both red wine grapes that offer exceptional promise for Nebraska vineyards and beyond.
- A Summer Field Day is in the works, date and location to be announced soon.

Best wishes for a truly successful growing and winemaking season! Cheers!

Paul E. Read

Items for your Calendar:

July 9-11-2024 The 48th Annual Conference of the American Society for Enology and Viticulture-Eastern Section (ASEV-ES) in Cleveland, OH

UNL Summer Field Day soon to be announced.



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