

## **WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION**

### Table of Contents

1. Meeting Reminder
2. 2005 Lessons Learned on Long Island by Alice Wise, Cornell Cooperative Extension
3. A Pennsylvania Winemaker's Visit to California by Carl Helrich, Allegro Vineyards

**Grape Disease and Pesticide Credits (PA) Workshop on Monday, March 13 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster, PA.** While you are in town for Wineries Unlimited, update your required pesticide applicator's license requirements at this workshop. The due date for getting current is March 31 so this is an ideal opportunity to collect most of the credits you will need for this year. Six category and five core credits are being offered. Don't just come for the credits - important information about disease and insect control including early season disease control, grape berry moth control and an update on vine decline trunk diseases will be offered as well as basic information about boom and airblast sprayer calibration, pesticide safety and worker protection standards. I recommend that all growers acquire an applicator's license because the knowledge you gain will make you a better, safer and healthier grape grower. You can check the current status of your applicator's license at the pest ed web site at <http://www.pested.psu.edu/>. Know if you need more credits! Registration fee is \$40 and covers handouts, lunch and breaks. Registration and information are attached to this message.

**New Grape Grower Workshop** in cooperation with Wineries Unlimited is being offered on **Wednesday, March 15 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Lancaster Host Resort in Lancaster, PA.** Fritz Westover (VA Tech), Dr. Joe Fiola (U Md) and Mark Chien (Penn State) will team teach this intensive one-day workshop for people who are interested in starting or have just recently planted a commercial wine grape vineyard in the Mid-Atlantic region. It provides a general overview of all aspects of vineyard development from pre-plant decisions such as site selection, variety and rootstock choice, vineyard economics, local grape markets, equipment and supplies, ordering vines, plant care and planting, through vineyard care up to the third year including trellis choices, training, pruning, disease and pest control, vine nutrition, weed control and more. The focus is on practical information that will give the prospective or beginner grower a foundation of knowledge needed to start a successful vineyard and business. Registration fee of \$135 includes information folder with handouts and presentations CD, lunch and breaks. You must register for this meeting separately from Wineries Unlimited. This meeting is a great compliment to the recently held vineyard development workshop in Pennsylvania. In PA call Mark Chien at 717-394-6851, MD call Joe Fiola (301) 432-2767 and in VA call Fritz Westover (540) 869-2560 for more information. Information and registration are attached. Also plan to attend Wineries Unlimited while you are in Lancaster. Registration and information are attached to this message.

**Pruning Workshop on Thursday, March 16th** from 9-12 at Manatawny Creek Winery in Douglassville, PA. Call Marilyn at 717-394-6851 to register.

### **2005 Lessons Learned on Long Island from Alice Wise, Cornell Cooperative**

#### **Extension**

*My colleague Alice is extremely observant and vigilant in her research vineyard and her observations translate well to our own vinifera growers. For our purposes here, we can easily substitute GBM for PL and we certainly had our hands full with JB's. The mites are a continuing issue in vineyards in PA and something all growers should scout for and have a plan. While I didn't see a lot of PM on Chard clusters, it is always a threat under a variety of weather conditions. We did not get the big late season hit of bad weather that hampered the red grape harvest on LI, but it is always good advice to keep your vines healthy and active for the long, difficult run through to the end of harvest. - MLC*

The 05 season was one of extremes, sunny and dry for the entire summer then drenching rains in October. Here are some observations both from the research vineyard and the industry at large.

- Black rot still lurks as a threat to our vineyards. This disease is easily controlled yet sometimes taken for granted. If you don't believe this, try cutting out black rot sprays, even in a dry year but particularly in a wet year.

- It really is possible to cut down on insecticides. We applied one insecticide in 2005. A few growers avoided them altogether. With potato leafhopper infestations low to moderate, we used hedging as our PL control. Seriously, after we hedged off the PL-affected shoot tips, PL damage did not escalate (we kept a close eye on it) and thus we will be able to skip a treatment. It helped that Japanese beetles were a no show as well.

- Check for mites in July to avoid explosions in August. Scout vineyards and look for pockets of bronzing. Confounding this is the fact that mite researchers have been unable to prove that bronzing has a major effect on vines. Thus, this is only anecdotal but many of us have felt that significant bronzing in addition to drought, pest or nutrient stress can have profound effects on the vine's ability to ripen fruit. We can't let these issues chip away at the ability of our vineyards to fully ripen fruit.

- Early PM on clusters can be avoided. There really is only one solution to this – early leaf pulling particularly on Chardonnay. Chardonnay's clam shell leaves tend to obscure the cluster zone. Yet it is difficult to send a machine through as it can slice off tender young clusters. Sending a crew through and leafing the cluster zone, even if it is just one side, may be money well spent. Big wads of clusters are a complicating factor. PM can often be found lurking in these corners as they are nice and humid and resist spray penetration. Cluster thinning Chardonnay sooner rather than later will help. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough – unfortunately, losses to PM can be substantial. Also, rendering fruit susceptible to cluster rots later on in the season can be a consequence.

- PM control, part 2 – perhaps we need to be targeting newly formed berries with a directed spray of sulfur. Of course, a directed spray is totally irrelevant if the cluster zone is obscured with leaves.

- Make sure vines are healthy going into September. June, July and August are crazy months, there is no doubt about it. But they are the make or break months for pest management and water management. Keeping PM and downy out of the vineyard is critical during these months. Avoiding drought stress is equally critical. One reference (I can't remember the source) stated that once vines experience a certain degree of drought stress, the ripening process is irreparably interrupted. If the goal of our industry is absolutely ripe fruit, then an avoidance of severe drought stress should be more aggressively pursued in seasons like 2005.
- Make sure vines are healthy going into September, part 2. Enduring the October rains was a burden for all vineyards. Give vines a fighting chance by making sure they are healthy going into the fall storm season. (AW)

### **A Pennsylvania Winemaker's Visit to California**

*Regular readers of this e-newsletter are all too familiar with my lengthy viticultural travelogues. Well, if there is one precious commodity in our industry it is another perspective. On any issue. Carl Helrich and Kris Miller from Allegro Vineyards were with me during a visit to a vineyard in the Sierra Foothills. I asked Carl if he would be kind enough to compile his notes into an article about our visit. He manages to synthesize the numerous disciplines that are involved in running a successful wine business into a complete view of what he saw and heard that day in that vineyard. I'm not exactly sure about the reference to Picasso and Jackson Pollock but it will be fun to try to figure that one out! I hope you will enjoy his notes. MLC*

Visiting vineyards outside of Pennsylvania always affords me a unique perspective on what we think of as "normal" viticulture. This is even more true when I see vines growing in a climate so distinctly different from our own. After getting our fill of the Unified Wine and Grape Symposium, we were invited to see Ann Kraemer's vineyard in Amador County.

For those of you who want the "take away" ideas skip to the bottom. The slow and boring digestion of the details follows:

Amador County is located just east of Sacramento, California, in old gold-prospecting foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. The climate is hot and dry, affording good growing conditions for high-octane Zinfandels. Ann's vineyard is roughly 34 planted acres on about a fifty acre parcel. It is planted predominately to Zinfandel (10 acres), Syrah, Tempranillo, and a few other Rhone varieties.

I asked Anne why she chose Amador to plant vineyards. For her, it was pure economics. The wine regions of Napa and Sonoma are priced prohibitively high for start-ups, wineries and vineyards alike. Compared to East coast economics, even Amador does not look inexpensive.

Grape prices are remarkably comparative to ours. Zinfandel will go for \$1600/ton. The discrepancy comes in the wine pricing and the wine quality. The least expensive

Zinfandels were in the low teens, and the most expensive approach \$40+ per bottle. The difference that was ready to see across the board was the quality in the bottle. Even the sub-\$20 bottles usually have plush fruits, nice balance, some depth, and are free of faults. The \$30+ bottles tend to have specific characters a lot of them are vineyard designated wines with deeper flavors.

What the consumers get are great values when compared to our own wines. At a certain point (on the second day) I got tired of the California-centric perspective on grape-growing. Yes, grapes were meant to be grown in California, and California was meant to grow grapes. But for all that, there was a lack of uniqueness. There was plenty of fruit, soft tannins, low acid. But the flavors were not very different than what we can achieve at our high points. It's hard to tell if the consumer's palate is driving the style, or if the style is native to California and that consumers have only stumbled upon it. But I was hoping to be amazed, stunned at points, or blown away. I wasn't, and yet I wasn't disappointed either.

What I missed was the acid, the backbone to the wines. We can get our grape physiologically ripe (no pyrazines with deep flavors) at relatively lower brix levels. In California, they still have herbal characters at 24 brix on some red varieties, hence their need for extended hang times and its subsequent dehydration.

I was, on the whole, encouraged. The growers on the Left coast have it easier than we do. There's no rain. Really. No rain. That means barely spraying. But even more, it means fruit concentration. We struggle with water retention, both in the vineyard and in the winery. Our precipitation levels are so high, and our soils retain so much water, it's no wonder our fruit seems comparatively dilute. But our flavors are there in the best of times.

What the growers there have been able to do is to find the balanced vines. They located the sites and varieties and management for successful grape growing. In fact, it probably is wine growing. They accomplished it by years of careful vineyard management. But their path was not littered with rain, disease, and trying to survive the winter. Ours will be a tougher path to great wine.

Here's what I learned from Ann:

\*A balanced vine is the goal. This is seen by a vineyard that needs no hedging. Vine growth should stop on its own, slowing at veraison.

\*Vine growth can be balanced by pruning, but also by crop load, and irrigation. This may mean setting a larger crop to slow canopy vigor, and then drop fruit to ripen the rest.

\*Plant the grapes where the grapes grow best, soil by soil.

\*Trellising needs to further the training of a balanced vine first, then tweaked to allow for wine making allowances.

\*There's a difference between fertility and vigor. This is very important for Allegro.

\*Vine nutrition (with its source in soil nutrition and amendments) is paramount.

The value in the wines of California is much greater than ours. Ours are distinctive, but it's obvious why they have been so successful in the marketplace. That said, they are not out of our reach. For us, we will need to spend more than just a few years of work. It will take decades. But I feel that they are within reach of us.

In California, they have rallied around no more than a dozen grape varieties, and mostly just a few. They grow these because they work and they know they work. **The one thing I know is true is that we need to find these varieties for ourselves.** Our diversity keeps us from a regional identity and the strength gained from that. Pennsylvania has numerous distinct growing regions (central, south central, south east, northwest, west). No one grape variety will work in all these, but some overlap may occur. This is the diversity we need. We need to be trying to be Picassos not Pollacks.

Carl Helrich  
Allegro Vineyards  
March 5, 2006

**Attachments:**

[PSU\\_wkshp\\_reg\\_info\\_Mar061.pdf](#)

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