

WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

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First PAW Spring Vineyard Walk Around: Sustainable Wine Growing

I know from my work that farming in a responsible and sustainable way is very important to most of our wine grape growers. It is important to keep up to date on issues related to sustainable viticulture practices so the first Pennsylvania Association of Winegrowers Spring Vineyard Walk Around will be devoted to that topic. The meeting is being held at Spyglass Ridge Vineyard near Sunbury in central PA and hosted by Tom and Tammy Webb. The centerpiece of the day will be a tour of their vineyard and winery along with a wine tasting. Invited speakers include Dr. Michel Cavigelli, a soil scientist from USDA-ARS who will address the amazing subterranean ecosystem that lies beneath our feet. Alice Wise, the Cornell extension viticulturist on Long Island has crafted a sustainable viticulture document for the 2600 acre wine grape industry on Long Island. It reads as a best practices guide and much of it will apply to growers in our region. She will explain this important work which continues with cooperation with other growing districts in NY. Many of you have seen and heard Ed Boyce in the past from Black Ankle Vineyard in central MD. Ed and Sarah have developed an outstanding property with the goal of farming using organic and biodynamic methods. Ed will provide an update on the results of their progressive methods. And, not at all least in significance, PAW will hold it's annual business meeting and elections, which in these times of critical issues for our industry, should receive your participation and support. Please plan to attend this walk around. This event is jointly organized with Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Date: Saturday, April 22

Time: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: Spyglass Ridge Winery, <http://www.spyglassridgewinery.com/> for information and directions

Cost: \$75 per person - lunch, breaks, wine tasting and handouts included

You can read more about the walk around and download registration information at the PAW web site: <http://www.pawinegrowers.com/>. A full info/reg flyer is attached to this message. If you have questions, please call Mark Chien at 717-394-6851.

Here We Go Again...

It is always my favorite time of the year, when the buds push and a new season begins. No matter how bad the last vintage was, the new one offers a clean slate and great

promise for fine wines. The miracle of nature is to see those buds opening, shoots extending and leaves unfolding... it really seems like magic. It also is a time when you have to be ready for lots of work. The easy days of pruning, when every day is the same activity, will be replaced by the uncertainty of the weather and how it will affect the vines and crop. The more you do to prepare for the unfolding of the new vintage, the more successful it is likely to be. I thought I would just outline some of the things I think would be good for you to be doing and thinking about right now based on my experience as a grower....

- Weed control. Weeds compete for resources with vines, especially young vines so it is important to keep them under control. Be aware that there is a balance between killing every single unwanted plant and have a vineyard overgrown with weeds. Plants are hosts for both beneficial and harmful insects, fungi, bacteria, and nematodes. You need to figure out what the balance point is in your own vineyard's ecology. My recommendation is to get weeds under control in new vineyards because they can harm the health of young vines. It is late but not too late for pre-emergence herbicide applications although you should check with the label. If you are working in a non-bearing vineyard, be sure to use herbicides especially labeled for that use such as Surflan and Prowl. A new pre-emergence product called Chateau SW (Valent USA) is available that has had good reviews by colleagues in NY for vineyards 2+ years and provides both annual broadleaf and grass control. It has some post-emergence effect. I like getting weed control done early with later applications of post-emergence herbicides like glyphosate products or glufosinate (Rely). Any mechanical hoeing has to wait until pre-emergence herbicides action period has ended and can be combined with minimal herbicide use for good control. Of course, a lot depends on the weather. As always when its wet weeds are a problem and if its dry you can use less herbicide.
- Planting and Replants. Now is the time to be getting fields prepped and marked. Replants need every possible advantage they can get trying to reestablish in a mature vineyard. There will be plenty conspiring against its successful development such as nematodes, soil pathogens, competition from weeds, cover crop and even neighbor vines, herbicide applications and more. Move the new hole away from the old plant location and consider using slow release fertilizers and/or various mychorizal fungi supplement products available to initiate root growth. Adequate water will probably be the best help of all. In this case, I would recommend a grow tube to encourage shoot development and protect green tissue from herbicides. I sure like training stakes for nice, straight trunks. Do not let large neighbor vines shade the replants during the growing season.
- Vines should be pruned and tied by now. I'm getting more growers telling me that they are switching to cane pruning as they see trunk diseases take out cordons. There is certainly logic to this. Be sure to leave a 6" gap between canes and enough renewal spurs in good position to replace fruiting canes. Chose canes for production this year and worry about position later but try to have replacement canes well positioned for next year.

- The *NY/PA Pest Management Guidelines for Grapes: 2006* is available at your county extension office (\$10 + S/H) and I strongly recommend getting the latest edition. It never changes that much but there are enough new products each year to make it worth getting a new copy, especially as growers seek to rotate chemicals to avoid resistance. Now is the time to develop a spray program based on your experience, especially the relative success you had controlling disease and insects last year. 05 was not as challenging as 03 and 04 but every year is different and you have to be ready. So a clear outline of a strategy is necessary with plenty of flexibility to adapt to conditions as they unfold during the season. In particular growers need to be aware of the late season rot complex that has affected many of our vineyards. In the last Viticulture Notes from Virginia Tech, their new pathologist, Ashley Meyers gave an excellent summary of the ripe, bitter and sour rots and possible control strategies. Dr. Jim Travis has been talking about these all winter so you should take them very serious. Get started early and be prepared with your best materials in the critical pre-bloom through bloom applications. Going into the season, we are primarily concerned with *phomopsis* and *powdery mildew* and *black rot* follows very quickly. Be ready for these as well as climbing cutworms and grape flea beetles, both were present last year and Sevin is the recommended control agent. It would be a very good idea to remove any infected debris such as mummies and/or canes from the vineyard. Reducing the sources of overwintering inoculum is critical to reducing the disease load at the front end of the season. If you had a big problem at the end of last year, be even more ready to implement control measures this year. Remember, later in April or May we will have Dr. Wayn Wilcox's annual disease treatise to supplement the NY/PA guide. Watch for this important work. Also, the Grape and Barrel Newsletter will have monthly disease updates from Jim Travis.
- Frost will be a concern when new growth appears. In Texas two weeks ago a radiant frost dipped to 25F when shoot were 4" and many acres were frozen. Active protection methods like overhead sprinklers and wind fans are rare in our area so about the best thing a grower can do is keep the cover crop mowed as low as possible and, if clean tilled, keep the surface flat and compacted. Helicopters are an expensive and sometimes dangerous but effective option for protection.
- Equipment and supplies. You know what are the essentials... tractors, sprayers, ATVs, mowers, etc. They should all be ready to go. Calibrate sprayers well ahead of the first application. I wish every grower was present to hear Tom Reed's (TeeJet) explanation about calibrating boom and airblast sprayers on March 13. It was outstanding and understandable. Calibrating is all about the numbers but there is also a sixth sense about if what you are doing is right. Measure twice, cut once, if you know what I mean. Trellis should be in good repair.
- Grapes sales should be progressing now both for wineries and vineyards. I encourage the use of contracts of any kind, simple, complex, get all the information down on paper. It is the best time to sit down with wine makers and talk about the 2005 vintage and what should be done in the coming growing season. It's easier now when there is less pressure. Taste the wines and understand quality and production goals for the vineyard and winery.

- Information. We have a great extension community in this region that dispenses amazing amounts of useful information. If you are not getting these four newsletters, you should sign up for them today... 1. *Finger Lakes Vineyard Notes* by Dr. Tim Martinson and his weekly e-mail updates (tem2@cornell.edu); *Long Island Fruit and Vegetable Update* (via e-mail) by Ms. Alice Wise, contact Linda Holm at lml10@cornell.edu; *Lake Erie Regional Grape Program* electronic update from Cornell/PSU extension team (grape@netsync.net); and *Viticulture Notes* (via e-mail) by Tony Wolf at Virginia Tech, contact Fritz Westover at westover@vt.edu. Also, plan to attend twilight meetings and field days during the growing season.

Associate Winegrower Wanted at Stargazer Vineyards

Associate winegrower for 10,000 vine, all-vinifera Pennsylvania vineyard and 2500 sq. ft. winery. Position entails responsibility for all phases of grape growing, winemaking and marketing with a view toward expansion of the existing operation and eventual assumption of full management. Candidate must have training and experience sufficient to pursue these goals independently and must be comfortable with pursuing sustainable practices. Send resume with salary expectations to -- Stargazers Vineyard, 1024 Wheatland Drive, Coatesville PA 19320-5203. Phone 610-486-0422.

www.stargazers.biz

2006 Keystone Wine Conference and PWA Annual Meeting

Mark the dates for the PWA annual meeting which is now being called the Keystone Winery Conference. May 15-17 at the Wyndham Harrisburg/Hershey Hotel. A very eclectic program will feature enology, viticulture, wine marketing and training programs. Jim Law from Linden Vineyards will give a talk titled "*Faith Based Winegrowing*". Donald Coe from Black Star Farm Winery in Michigan will present "*Becoming a Destination Winery*". Dr. Jim Travis will give a disease primer for the coming season (pesticide credits) and Stephen Menke will offer a review of the 2005 vintage and host a tasting of wines from the 05 Keystone competition. Bill Nelson, president of WineAmerica will give an update of the direct shipping issues. A picnic on Sunday evening will be hosted by Naylor Winery and there will be bus transportation from the hotel. A program is attached. For information and registration, please call Jennifer at the PWA office, 717-234-1844.

Attachments:

[2006 Keystone Program.DOC](#)

[2006 Spring Walk Around Program.doc](#)

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