

WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

In the Vineyard

When I was a grower, this is just the time of the growing season when I would start getting very nervous. After veraison the weather really matters. Vine vigor is probably the biggest issue right now. As we head into veraison we are certainly wishing that the shoot tips would shut down and shoots would begin to lignify. We need the vines to start focusing on ripening fruit. I have heard some corn growers complaining about the lack of water recently and that's always a good sign for us. Let's hope the dry weather continues for another couple of months. Canopy management is still very critical and anything you can do to open up the fruit zone to air and light will be helpful at this point. Hedging and leaf pulling are probably your best tactics for keeping a large canopy under control. It will encourage lateral growth but those leaves, once mature, will contribute to the ripening of your fruit. We got hit by mid season powdery mildew, especially in Chardonnay with the problem being more on berries than leaves. As a consequence, quite a bit of it has hit the ground. From some of the reports I am receiving I have a fear that we are seeing resistance to some of the fungicides being used in vineyards. I hope we can have a serious discussion about this with Jim and Bryan at the walk around. Berries should be resistant now but the powdery mildew infections seemed to linger this year. Leaves still need to be protected, especially those tender laterals on top to go the distance. Again, keeping shade out of the canopy will help enormously. Black rot was also very present this year. If you had problems with any of these disease there may be holes in your spray program. It might be what you are spraying but also how and when. All of these should be considered. I hope we can display some sample spray programs from FREC and experienced growers at the walk around. I am a bit concerned about the harvest season in 2006. If it is dry, we should be okay. But if it is wet and certainly if we have a major event like a hurricane deep into the season, there is considerable danger lurking in the clusters. With the powdery problems we have had there may be diffuse powdery mildew on berries that can create openings for ripe and bitter rots. Tight cluster varieties are especially susceptible. Now is the time when those bloom and bunch close sprays may begin to pay off. Monitor crop loads as carefully as possible and adjust according to wine and economic needs but I would encourage growers to move to the lower end of the yield equation. Getting fruit off the vine mature and early this season may be a big advantage. I'm always interested in your view from the vineyard. If you have observations to share, please write or call me. See you next week at the walk around. We have a lot to talk about.

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