

# GRAPE PRESS

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Len Thompson of Amherst Vineyards, left, accepts the VVA 2012 Grower of the Year award from Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Todd Haymore during the technical meeting in February.

## Len Thompson of Amherst Vineyards Named VVA's 2012 Grower of the Year

Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Todd Haymore presented Len Thompson of Amherst Vineyards with the 2012 Grower of the Year award Feb. 1 during the Virginia Vineyards Association's Annual Technical Meeting and Trade Show at the Omni in Charlottesville.

"Len Thompson is one of the unheralded heroes behind the success of the Virginia Vineyards Association," said J. Rock Stephens, chairman of the Virginia Wine Board. "For as long as I can remember he has donated freely of his time to support the association and the wine industry. He helps other growers and aspiring growers while producing grapes that have been utilized in wines that have won awards in international competitions."

### From Dublin to Amherst

Len immigrated to the United States at the age of 19 from Dublin, Ireland, during an early oil shortage when jobs were scarce worldwide. He joined the U.S. Navy and, after a successful career, retired in 1999 as a lieutenant commander. During those years leading up to retirement, he and his wife, Kay, started researching what they wanted to do after Len left the Navy.

They had met a number of winery and vineyard owners during their travels around the wineries in Virginia and had

volunteered at wine festivals. So the decision was made — start a vineyard and sell the grapes!

Len and Kay purchased land in Amherst County in 1999, planting six acres. Varietals include Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Vidal Blanc and Chambourcin.

### Award-winning grapes

Wines produced from grapes grown at Amherst Vineyards have garnered numerous medals, including the Best of Show for the 2002 Rockbridge Heritage from the Atlantic Seaboard Winegrowers Association.

An independent grower, Len has been an extremely active member of the VVA for over a decade, serving in many capacities, including two terms as vice president, two terms as treasurer, one term as secretary and a term as communications chair.

Len and the board tackled issues such as the IRS, new VVA bylaws, and the move to use 100% Virginia-grown grapes in the Governor's Cup competition wine. Retired from the VVA board, Thompson, who also works for Rockbridge Vineyards, continues to serve the wine industry as a board member of the Virginia Wineries Association — he is currently serving as vice president.

## President's Corner ...

Tom Kelly, VVA President

Greetings All!

As you know, the spring edition of the Grape Press is typically a recap of our previous Winter Technical meeting and this issue will continue that tradition.

I was very impressed with the quality of content for this year's meeting. The speakers were some of the best we've had and the topics were timely and pertinent as we head into a new growing season.

This year's theme was disease management and the topics ranged from basic seasonal disease control to a more intensive look at pathogenic diseases such as Pierce's Disease and Grape Vine Yellows as well as insect control. We also included a tasting and presentation of the Governor's Case, a Viognier panel tasting, a presentation and tasting of the PD tolerant variety Blanc du Bois and a preview of the new online Sustainable Viticulture workbook.

We heard industry updates from the Virginia Wine Board, Wine Marketing Board and Virginia Wine Council as well as an address from Secretary of Agriculture Todd Haymore. Our many thanks go out to those who work so hard to garner the legal and financial support that makes the success of our industry possible.

As always, one of the highlights of the meeting is the presentation of the Grower of the Year Award. This year's recipient was Len Thompson and I can think of no person more deserving of recognition of tireless service than he. Congratulations, Len!

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# Regional Reports

## Eastern Virginia

By Pete Johns, New Kent Winery

The weather this winter in the Eastern Region of Virginia is fluctuating more than normal; one day we will have balmy sunny weather and the next day we will have snow squalls with dropping temperatures. I keep thinking how challenging growing grapes can be here in the Mid-Atlantic Region and especially in Virginia.

Our experience with similar weather conditions is dictating that we prune in a very conservative manner this year. At our winery we are leaving at least 4 buds in our rough pruning, hoping that we can avoid any damage from a late frost. Just before bud break or shortly after bud break we will come back into the vineyard and prune back to 2 buds. This practice actually slows plant growth slightly and often helps the younger vines establish better root systems.

While talking with several other growers in our region I have learned that many young vines or new plantings did not fare well last year. This failure could be due to improper soil preparations prior to planting.

### Prep the Soil

Deep rip plowing along the rows where the vines will be planted is a must. Loosening the soils and allowing the tap roots to go deep improves the health of the vines and helps to ensure they start growing successfully.

We also encourage new growers to dig their holes for the vines just prior to planting and to place a small amount of root stimulator in each hole as they plant. We also like to water our young vines often with a heavy dose of Miracle Grow.

Just drilling a hole in a pasture and planting a vine is not a good practice and has cost some growers both money and a great deal of time.

Many growers in our region who have vineyards in the 8- to 15-year-old range are cane-pruning some vines. This practice helps to establish new or fresh cordons.

Several vineyards are also replacing damaged or dead vines. We have found it is wise to try and pull all the roots along with the trunks when replacing vines. This is true no matter how old the vine; even young roots harbor diseases. Leaving diseased roots in the vineyard can only mean trouble by infecting new vines and creating additional problems.

### New Growers Needed

Recent articles and lectures have pointed out that the Virginia wine industry needs new growers. There will soon be a critical shortage of quality Virginia-grown grapes available to our wineries.

One reason for this shortage is the fact that many of the growers who sold their grapes are now taking up the challenge of winemaking and are opening their own wineries. With more than 240 wineries in Virginia and many more coming forward soon, the need for additional growers is very apparent.

Eastern Virginia is seeing a number of new growers joining our ranks. We here at the New Kent Winery try to encourage all of the new growers. We suggest that they attend classes such as those put on by Dr. Tony Wolf with his New Growers seminars.

We encourage new growers to read as much as they can about growing grapes in Virginia and most importantly we encourage them to talk to nearby growers prior to their startup.

If established Virginia grape growers will make an effort to assist these new growers then they won't have to suffer through the same mistakes that we have all made.

Try to remember: "All boats rise in a rising tide." More quality growers will lead to more Virginia wines of the highest quality, which makes for a higher demand for our fruit each year — a true win-win for us all.

## Northern Virginia

By Dean Triplett, Greenstone Vineyard

Not to be outdone by our most recent past, this winter's weather pattern has been one of the warmest on record. Fortunately, the temps

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# Regional Reports

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have been cold enough to keep the vines dormant to the point of this writing – the end of February – with no signs of bud activity. Also the forecast moving forward through March seems to call for relatively cool temperatures during the day, 40's and low 50's, and with night temps in the mid to low 30's.

So far at least there aren't any signs of an earlier than "normal" bud break. We had our coldest winter weather between January 23 and 25th. Night time temps got down to about 7 degrees on the 23rd and low teens the next two nights. Rain/snowfall for most of the winter has been lower than average. We did have one very heavy rain event on January 30th where we got close to 3 and 1/2 inches overnight.

We've had several very light snowfalls throughout the winter but never more than 3 inches at a time. It does seem like the winter has been prolonged and dreary but compared to folks out in the mid-west and up north complaining seems uncalled for.

Rough pruning is done in all our vineyards and final pruning is well underway. So far the pace has been relaxed, with no sign of any winter damage, and hopefully it will stay that way. Most of the vineyards around ours seem to be in a similar situation.

I have heard some grumblings from some vineyard owners about difficulties with their vineyard crews. Labor issues have always been a problem with some operations. Getting and retaining qualified workers at a price they feel they can afford can be difficult.

At the latest Loudoun Wineries Association meeting I attended, I learned that Loudoun County has over 30 bonded wineries with an additional 14 seeking a license. Such rapid growth will almost certainly exacerbate the problems some folks have with labor. Qualified labor, like high quality fruit, is in high demand and not always easy to find or retain.

## The Need for High-Quality Fruit

And speaking of high quality fruit, demand for it is intense this year and prices are moving up in direct response. While wineries will no doubt complain, this will be welcome news for independent growers. I think most folks would agree that being profitable growing grapes alone is difficult in the best of years. Fruit prices have crept up only slightly over the last half dozen years. Cost of production however has not, especially for chemicals.

At the recently held VVA winter technical meeting held in Charlottesville we heard from Secretary of Agriculture Todd Haymore that

the Virginia wine industry needs more fruit. Governor McDonnell most recently made the same statement at the Governor's Cup Gala in Richmond. We of course have seen a tremendous growth in wineries statewide, but not a similar increase in grape production.

I talked recently to one grower who is very familiar with the industry in the Charlottesville area about the availability of fruit, specifically Cabernet Franc. He told me that he was unaware of any fruit being available this year. Hopefully between the current high demand and higher prices for quality fruit, growers will start putting more vines in the ground. The one caveat however is that growers still need to match the best varieties with the best sites. What we don't need is a large quantity of mediocre fruit.

## New Diseases on the Horizon

While at the VVA meeting we heard from various researchers about exciting new diseases and pests that we can look forward to having to deal with in the not too distant future, Red Blotch and Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) being two of my favorites. And let's not forget about some of our oldies but goodies, Pierce's Disease, Leaf Roll Virus and its buddies, and of course North American Grapevine Yellows.

While I might make light of these and our other new (and old) viruses, bacteria, or insect pests, I truly understand the serious nature of the message the researchers are trying to get across to growers. I just sometimes have to wonder about the sanity of being a grape grower in the mid-Atlantic area.

Seriously though, we need to keep a vigilant eye open for all the newer concerns that these researchers are working on. Pierce's Disease for example used to be considered a "southern" problem by growers in our region. Unfortunately it has

been found in vineyards as far north as Front Royal in Warren County and Round Hill in Loudoun. I would be surprised if we will ever find a way to eradicate any of these pests. But hopefully we'll find methods that will help us manage them and still attain quality and profitability.

Still, I often wonder if there's not a correlation between the number of researchers and the number of new diseases. Hmmm?



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# President's Corner

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## Record turnout

We are thrilled by the record turnout for the meeting this year. It is not only a reflection of both the growth of our membership and of the industry as a whole but especially of the increasing quality of the content of the material presented. Thank you, Tony Wolf and your amazing staff at the AREC for making this all possible.

Unfortunately, with this success come the challenges of finding enough space for trade show vendors and attendees alike. Rest assured we will be working with the great staff at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville to expand our space for next year's meeting and into the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Past President Bill Tonkins for his exemplary service over the past two years. As a result of his efforts, the VVA has taken many steps toward the 21st century. We now have an updated website with social media capability, and an online version of the Sustainable Viticulture Workbook is due to be launched this spring. And let's not forget — some of the best technical meetings to date.

Bill's final effort before stepping down as president was to arrange for our upcoming Summer Technical Meeting at RdV and Glen Manor Vineyards where we will be discussing the unique challenges associated with steep terrain viticulture. This promises to be a fascinating day that will be capped off with the Annual Summer Social held at nearby Rappahannock Cellars. I look forward to continuing to work with Bill in his current roll as past president as I am sure I will come to depend on his guidance over the next two years.

I would also like to thank all those who are continuing on with the board and those who have stepped up to fill the empty seats. Thanks to Treasurer Kay Thomas, Vice President Jim Benefiel and Secretary Karl Hamsch. Also special thanks to all those who are heading up our standing committees. They are Turtle Zwadlo, Emily Pelton, Paul Mierzejewski, Bill Robson and Bill Freitag.

## On the agenda

We have a number of exciting items on our agenda for the coming term. As I mentioned above, we will be launching the online version of The Virginia Sustainable Viticulture Workbook. Heading up this effort is Bill Freitag, who will take over the reins from Tremain Hatch. Tremain has been vol-

unteering as the technical coordinator for the workbook for the last several years and has done a great job putting together the hard copy of the workbook.

As we now move toward an online version that has far greater functionality, we realize the need for a more permanent project manager who can execute the development and rollout of the new database as well as provide training and technical assistance to users.

Bill's technical background makes him the ideal person for the job and we appreciate his stepping up for what promises to be a challenging effort. The VVA board considers this workbook to be an important tool in increasing the quality of Virginia wine grapes and so we have formed a new standing committee that Bill will chair.

Anyone interested in participating in the committee and further development of the workbook should contact Bill directly at [bill@tollgatefarm.com](mailto:bill@tollgatefarm.com)

Also, I will be making the expansion of vineyard acreage in Virginia a top priority for the next two years. It is becoming painfully obvious that the wine industry in Virginia is growing by leaps and bounds in every sector but one: grape production. This is a precarious position for the industry if we are to establish and maintain unique regional character for our wines.

We currently have several ideas on the table that will help encourage current and new growers to plant more grapes as well as help to identify sites that have the potential to produce high-quality wine grapes. The board will be exploring some of those ideas in the coming months and I would encourage anyone who has ideas on how to encourage more vineyard planting to contact a board officer and share your thoughts.

Finally, I hope to explore ways of building a better trained local workforce for our industry. I will have to defer to others with more expertise in the area than I for guidance but I feel strongly that a more permanent, skilled work force is needed if we as an industry are to become truly sustainable. Again, I welcome any ideas or thoughts you may have on the matter.

I am pleased and honored to be able to serve our industry as president of the VVA and look forward to the opportunity to meet and serve you all over the coming years.

Cheers!



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# Sustainable Viticulture Program Update

By Bill Freitag

By now most of you have heard about the Sustainable Viticultural Practices Workbook project, but would like more details. I will attempt to fill in the knowledge gaps with some background on this project, key objectives, implementation status, and future plans.

Recognizing the need to keep pace with the shift in the consumer market place toward “green” products and sustainable land stewardship, a group of industry leaders assembled in 2008 at Pollak Vineyards to create a program designed to enhance and encourage sustainable viticultural best management practices in Virginia. That gathering of people grew into periodic meetings of an informal workgroup of some 15-25 persons who shaped the workbook’s contents over the next five years.

The workgroup was and remains composed of owners and employees of independent vineyards and wineries, as well as several vineyard consultants. Also on the team are Dr. Tony Wolf and Tremain Hatch from VA Tech, who have played an important role in facilitating the project and providing technical assistance to the workgroup. It is important to note that this has, from the beginning, been an initiative led by the industry for the industry.

## Key Objectives

At that first meeting, the workgroup forged the basic structure and strategy of the program and developed several key objectives:

- That a vineyard and a winery program should be established independently of one another.
- That the program should start out as a self-assessment tool, with a scoring system that the grower could use to identify areas that need improvement.
- That the long-term vision for the program would incorporate third-party certification.
- That a survey be conducted to determine interest in the industry to support moving forward.

Since then, much progress has been made to achieve these objectives. The initial survey did indeed prove that there is significant interest throughout the industry in becoming more sustainable and eventually having a certification program that could be marketed through to the consumer. A self-assessment workbook was created after the workgroup settled on the format and technical content. The VVA then distributed the workbook in hard copy to the

industry. Several interactive presentations were conducted during VVA technical meetings.

## Putting the Workbook Online

After a few rounds of revisions, the workgroup conducted a second survey to assess interest in the workbook, solicit critiques, and determine the direction of the project. The results of that survey again showed great interest in the program. Most of the comments centered on minor changes to the format and scoring system. Following additional deliberation, the workgroup decided that the workbook should be made accessible online so that several other key components could be added. Those capabilities include:

- Individuals can rank themselves anonymously against other participating vineyards.
- After user input, the workbook automatically generates a list of next steps in terms of high priority practices.
- Individuals can track changes in scores over time.
- The VVA will be able to record, track, and report improvements across the industry as a whole.

As an industry in pursuit of continuous improvement against what is becoming world competition, the online workbook tool will help growers and prospective growers use all available information to enhance the performance of their vineyards and businesses. It will incorporate the current Sustainable Viticulture Practices Workbook onto the VVA website such that:

- Users (registered, and given password access) can record their inputs and updates on approximately 120 practices in 7 categories for each vineyard they register.
  - o Inputs (answers to practices questions) will be multiple choice, with date (month, year) completed.
  - o Interim inputs can be saved before completion of all questions, for return later to finish remaining entries.
  - o In subsequent years, users can update their profile for additional practices executed.
- Users will receive a score (calculated by Workbook Committee set rules).
- Users will receive a prioritized list of high-priority practices remaining to be completed (calculated by Workbook Committee

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# Stay Updated On the Plan for Wild Turkey Management

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and Virginia Tech’s Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation have developed a web page to provide information about the proposal for a Virginia Wild Turkey Management Plan. The plan will provide guidance on how to address the complex management challenges and issues related to desirable population levels, recreation (including hunting), human-turkey conflicts, and habitat conservation.

## Update as of January 2013

Since the last update, 13 individuals have accepted an invitation to serve on the Wild Turkey Management Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). These individuals represent a broad spectrum, including turkey hunters, other nature enthusiasts, agricultural and/or commodity producers, and representatives of organizations and agencies deemed important to turkey management.

This group will develop policy-level draft goals for inclusion in a new statewide management plan for wild turkeys. Issues raised during a series of focus group meetings held in April and May 2012 will provide a starting point for discussion. The draft management plan will be available for general public review and comment later this year.

Preparation of an educational document that reviews the history, biology and management of the wild turkey in Virginia is nearing completion and will be used to enhance the public’s knowledge and understanding of turkeys and turkey management; when completed, this document will be available via the VDGIF website. Monitor the VDGIF website for future updates.

Go to <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wild-life/turkey/managemen-planning-process> for a summary of issues raised during the focus groups and more information on the developing plan.



# Sustainable Viticulture

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set rules).

- A VVA staffer will administer the website (verifying user eligibility, issuing passwords, formatting and running reports).
- VVA can track aggregate scores over years, to be used for:
  - Identifying progress or lack thereof in overall and specific best management practices.
  - Focus educational programs on areas that need improvement across the state using established mechanisms such as:
    - VVA technical meetings
    - VT research program
    - VCE outreach programs

The VVA intends to make the Sustainability Workbook a permanent benefit of VVA, and to ultimately make the workbook financially self-supporting through dues, fees, and contracts for services. To do so will require the confirmation from Virginia wineries that, as in other states already pursuing this approach, sustainable farming represents a marketing opportunity for premium wine. Once both winemakers and growers attribute a value to sustainability, growers can be induced to incur the (often modest) incremental cost to achieve certification as sustainably farmed.

As an aside, the terminology for the workbook needs a catchy title, and all I have been able to come up with is *Virginia Sustainable Winegrowers self-Assessment Guide* (VSWAG). I'm open to suggestions.

The VVA has now engaged a contractor to develop the online version of the workbook. The VSWAG development is underway, with a working prototype scheduled for review by early March. The initial rollout of the complete online workbook is scheduled for early April. The tool being developed will be user-friendly and intuitive to use, requiring little if any formal training. However, some training is being developed concurrently that may include three approaches: a help site, online videos, and webinars.

## Initial Users Needed

The initial users during the rollout will most likely be the current workgroup members, augmented by any VVA members who choose to participate as "early adopters." Needed are enough initial users to provide the quantity of input for developing meaningful statistics while ensuring anonymity of all participants. This step will likely take several months.

The functionality of defining the user comparison against a total user average can be

set to compare all users in a wine region or the entire state. Another important feature, as mentioned earlier, is that a user may interrupt the data entry and then come back later to complete it. In other words, if completing the entire set of questions takes 1 to 1.5 hours, a user can stop after a half hour and then continue a day or two later without loss of data.

Once the VSWAG is operational and in general use, an annual cut-off for statistical reporting will be established. All yearly statistics will be saved for comparison purposes, both for the individual users and for the industry as whole to provide for trending data. Individual scores will be retained and displayed at the start of each new statistical year. The user can choose to leave some scores as is or update where appropriate. Note that individual data identifying a specific user (vineyard/winery) is not made public.

Communications within the community will be critical for managing the orderly and timely implementation. Activities to reach growers include:

- Notifications of the progress and capabilities of the workbook via the VVA website and blast emails, as needed, but at least four times per year.
- Program topics at VVA and cooperative-extension meetings.

I anticipate that the current workbook committee members in conjunction with other standing committees such as Education (Paul Mierzejewsky [mierskis@cstone.net](mailto:mierskis@cstone.net)) and Communications (Turtle Zwadlo [twadlo@pollakvineyards.com](mailto:twadlo@pollakvineyards.com)) will provide active support during the implementation. I urge you to contact me ([bill@tollgatefarm.com](mailto:bill@tollgatefarm.com)) or your favorite committee member (current list under the Sustainability Tab of the VVA website at <http://www.virginiavineyardsassociation.com>) for more information or to sign on to join the committee.

We will have the initial release of the prototype available on March 4, 2013. I will have committee members give it a hard look so we can be satisfied that the development is headed in the right direction. There will be several additional interim releases until the actual production is released in early April. Expect information on using the online workbook to be distributed using email and the VVA website, where we have posted some initial information under the Sustainability Tab. Look for a comprehensive report at the summer technical meeting on June 11, 2013.

In conclusion, I'm quoting a paragraph

## Back to Basics – III Phomopsis, Ripe Rot and Bitter Rot

By Mizuho Nita, Grape Pathologist, AHS AREC at Winchester

At the association's technical meeting, we reviewed the biology of Phomopsis, ripe rot and bitter rot of grapes, and discussed management strategies. In this article, I would like to provide a quick review. A copy of my presentation is available either from my blog (<http://grapepathology.blogspot.com/>) or the VVA website.

### Phomopsis

The pathogen for Phomopsis cane and leaf spot (*Phomopsis viticola*) is active in relatively low temperature range (~40F), and they produce spores early in the season. When I was at Ohio State University, we conducted several experiments to identify the best timing for fungicide applications for this disease. In addition, we conducted a greenhouse study to find out that there were

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from Christine Vrooman's article on sustainability in the Winter Issue of the Grape Press that wonderfully summarizes the spirit of the whole program.

*"Of all the reasons for implementing the upcoming Sustainable Viticulture Program, the most rewarding to me is that in implementing this program the grower gets up close and personal with his/her vineyard site. And in so doing, the result is a greater awareness of its needs which should result in improved fruit quality and healthier vines. By taking the time to go through each question of each section of the upcoming online workbook, the grower becomes more aware of the soil, the vine itself, the fruit, the pests, the land and waters downstream, their workers, their neighbors, the entirety of the result of all the maneuverings and actions that occur in their vineyard space. In answering the questions in all sections of the workbook I found myself much more aware of issues that I had not deemed to be that important. I feel even more intellectually invested in my vineyard."*

*Christine Vrooman, Ankida Ridge Vineyards*



# Back to Basics

## Phomopsis, Ripe Rot and Bitter Rot

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no curative materials for this disease.

We concluded that it was best to apply a protective fungicide (mancozeb, captan or Ziram) at around the 1- to 3-inch shoot growth stage, then continue with it for every 7 to 14 days, depending on vine growth.

We also examined the efficacy of a dormant season application of lime sulfur at 10 gal/A. It provided some reduction of disease development; however, since it did not allow skipping any in-season fungicide application, we recommend this treatment only if you have a severe case of Phomopsis in your vineyards. (Note: If you have an issue with Anthracnose, a dormant application of lime sulfur is one of the effective treatments.)

### Late-Season Diseases

In this presentation, we also discussed two late-season diseases. Ripe rot is caused by two species of fungal pathogens, *Colletotrichum acutatum* and *C. gloeosporioides*. Bitter rot is caused by a fungus *Greeneria uvicola*.

The two diseases are similar in many aspects. Both diseases can cause infection

early in the season (at bloom), but symptom expression develops close to harvest; both prefer much warmer condition (>75F), and both can alter the flavor of infected fruits and resulting wines.

Our lab is actively working on ripe rot pathogens since we have seen outbreaks of ripe rot in several VA vineyards. Preliminary results from our ripe rot inoculation studies showed that, in addition to bloom, berries are susceptible throughout the season.

Currently, mancozeb, captan and QoI fungicides are recommended for ripe rot; however, studies showed that *C. gloeosporioides* is not sensitive to captan. In addition, efficacies among QoI fungicides were not equal. We will continue to investigate these pathogens in the next few years to identify their infection conditions, fungicide efficacy, and application timing in order to develop effective management strategies.

There is not much data available for bitter rot on berry infection; however, this pathogen is known to cause infection from a pedicel of

the berry during the berry development. Thus, the infection seems to happen throughout the development of berries. As with ripe rot, mancozeb, captan and QoI fungicides are recommended for bitter rot, and Topsin-M is also moderately effective.

### Keep Air Circulating

Cultural practice is a very important component in disease management. All three pathogens mentioned here require extensive hours of wetness to cause successful infection, thus, it is critical to maintain good air circulation for your canopies.

In addition, all three pathogens can survive in woody tissues. Therefore, it would be a good idea to remove infected tissues from the vineyard, especially when you make a big cut of older canes or cordons.

In addition, ripe rot and bitter pathogens can take advantage of wounds, so bird management, insect management (e.g., grape berry moth), as well as early-season powdery mildew management can reduce the risk of an outbreak.



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## Opinion:

# In Search of Virginia Viognier

## How the early seeds of international recognition were sown

By Andrew Hodson, Veritas Vineyard

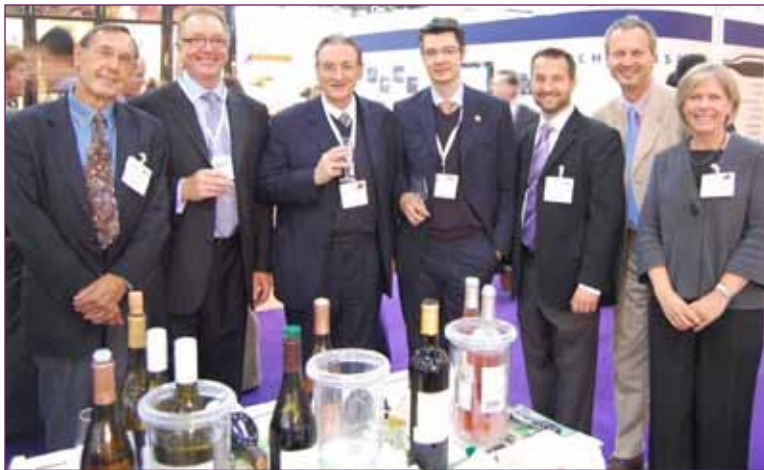
What fascinates me about wine growing and wine making is the incredible diversity not only between different wines but also within the same wine from different corners of the globe. This could not be truer than with Viognier, the white wine varietal that Virginia adopted in 2011 as its signature white wine.

Many people commented at the time that it was a brave step for Virginia to take on a single grape variety that Jancis Robinson considered as almost becoming extinct. At one point in the late 1980s there were a mere 82 acres of vines in the entire world. The Guigal family led the resurgence in the Rhone Valley by popularizing Viognier in the form of Condrieu. The grape is now widely planted, having spread from the Rhone Valley to California, Australia, South Africa, South America, and thanks to Dennis Horton, to Virginia. My concern is that with the ever-threatening globalization, Virginia will lose whatever competitive edge it has gained in less than the last decade.

### Virginia at the London Fair

Almost five years ago now, Richard Leahy, with a number of Virginia wineries, organized "The Virginia Wine Experience in London" at Vinopolis in an attempt to show the world that Virginia wines existed. It is worth noting that the United Kingdom has one of the most highly competitive wine markets in the world. Chris Parker and New Horizon Wines picked up on the strength of Virginia wines and at first with the help of the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) and then the Virginia Wine Marketing Board, Virginia wines appeared at the London International Wine Fair (LIWF). And last year, for the first time, Virginia had its own Virginia Wines stand at the LIWF thanks again to the efforts of the constituent wineries and the Virginia Wine Marketing Board.

So imagine the scene: little old Virginia at the LIWF in the presence of lavish stands from countries all over the world, and from regions within the United States such as California, Oregon and New York. Veritas was pouring Viognier along with Barboursville Vineyards



From left to right, Andrew Hodson, Chris Parker, Marcel Guigal, Philippe Guigal, Chris Blosser (Breaux Vineyards), Luca Paschina (Barboursville) and Patricia Hodson (Veritas).

and Breaux Vineyards when along came the legendary Steven Spurrier, the man who in The Judgment of Paris brought California into the limelight by beating the best French first growths in a blind taste off. Spurrier tried our Viognier, looked intrigued, and went to the French stand bringing over Marcel and Philippe Guigal (Guigal is the largest producer of Condrieu in France). They too were intrigued. "Zoot Alors," such a different expression of Viognier!

### Viognier in France

Condrieu is the pre-eminent expression of Viognier in France made entirely of the Viognier grape. It is grown on the steep granite slopes on the west bank of the Rhone river where the Rhone takes a sudden turn, the "coin de ruisseua" or "bend in the river." This is an area of about 500 acres of Viognier grapes. In comparison, Virginia now has just over 200 acres and California has 3000!

Condrieu is an "AOC" wine which means in order to keep its unique flavors and to be consistent in its production, both the viticulture and the wine making is strictly controlled down to the clone of the vine, the planting density, and the yield and ripe-

ness of the grapes. The yields are incredibly low with less than a pound of fruit per plant.

When we visited Condrieu with Bruce Zoecklein and Tony Wolf way back in 2002 we were struck not only by the terroir but also by the wine making practices. At least 50% of the wine was barrel-fermented and all wines went through malolactic conversion and were aged in oak. Is it surprising then that Condrieu is a very different wine than the average Virginia Viognier?

The descriptors of Viognier are for the most part uniform in describing the white flower, orange blossom, white peach and apricot aromatic flavors with an emphasis on the full-bodied, rich style. That is Condrieu, a highly regulated AOC wine. Viognier is now being produced in the Pays D'Oc and Languedoc regions of France where there are not those strict AOC regulations and consequently the flavors and textures run the similar gamut of Virginia wines.

It is clear that the growing conditions of what the French call "terroir" are crucial to the quality of the wine. It is also clear that every style of Viognier is being made in Virginia. Stephen Barnard of Keswick Vineyards, who has probably won more medals than anyone,

*continued on page 14*

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## Legislative Update:

# A Busy Year for the General Assembly

By Katie Hellebush, Director, Virginia Wine Council

The 2013 General Assembly session has come to a close in Richmond, and the VWC enjoyed a number of successes during the legislative term. We worked diligently throughout the session, successfully advocating for legislation to promote the growth of the industry and defending against legislation that would impose burdensome regulations on the industry. More than 2,800 bills and resolutions were introduced – that's an awful lot to consider in a short session!

The VWC set forth an ambitious 2013 legislative agenda. In addition, the VWC worked on agricultural, land use, and tax policy, all the while advocating for funding and resources for the industry.

The wine industry made its presence known on January 17th as part of the VWC's annual Wines & Vines Day at the Capitol. Industry representatives from the winery and vineyard industries spent the day at the General Assembly. They met with legislators and Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Todd Haymore, and showcased outstanding Virginia Wines. We were certainly a popular group among the halls of the General Assembly and Capitol that day!

The VWC is committed to protecting and advancing the industry's interest and stayed busy this 2013 General Assembly Session. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Virginia Vineyards Association, and we encourage your involvement and contributions to the VWC.

### VWC Legislative Agenda Update

**Contract Wine Making:** The VWC worked with many stakeholders to promote legislation that defines in the Code of Virginia a process for contract winemaking. This legislation, HB1849 (Delegate David B. Albo) and SB1127 (Senator Jeffrey L. McWaters), passed the House and the Senate and was awaiting Governor McDonnell's review at press time.

**Mulled Wine, Sangria:** Spurred by discussion and inquiries about the ability of farm wineries to serve mulled wine and sangria to their customers, the VWC put forward legislation to allow the serving of mulled wine and sangria in containers other than the original container. This legislation, HB2268 (Delegate Todd Gilbert), passed the legislature, and at press time was awaiting the review of Governor McDonnell.

*Note: The effective date for both contract wine-making and the serving of mulled wine and sangria is July 1, 2013.*

**Land Use:** The important matter of land use was also considered this session. HB2142, introduced by Delegate Mark L. Keam to address the ability of localities to regulate farm wineries, was defeated in committee. Delegate L. Scott Lingamfelter also sponsored HB1430 to address the issue of land use and to limit the ability of localities to impose unreasonable, burdensome ordinances. Although this legislation was defeated in committee, a group of stakeholders, including the VWC, will convene to discuss this pressing issue and participate in conversations to provide recommendations for the 2014 General Assembly Session. This group will mindfully discuss critical code sections, including that of farm wineries and the right to farm, and will consider how to address these very important issues while continuing to protect and promote the interests of farm wineries.

**Tax Policy:** The VWC also worked with Delegate Brenda L. Pogge on HB2236. This legislation clarifies current law that sales and use tax is not applied to labor, specifically to

the setup and installation of rental equipment, including but not limited to tables and chairs.

**Transportation:** A comprehensive transportation plan that included a number of tax changes affecting the wine industry was also passed by both the House and Senate and at press time was on the desk of Governor McDonnell for his consideration. How Virginia funds its transportation infrastructure is critical to the entire industry, from the operation of farm wineries, to the transport of grapes and wine, to the customers who travel Virginia roads, visiting tasting rooms and festivals around the Commonwealth.

**Water Quality Consolidation:** The House of Delegates approved HB2313 on a 60 to 40 vote and the Senate followed by voting 25 to 15 to approve the legislation. HB2313 increases the sales tax from 5 to 5.3 percent; includes increased fees, taxes and registration rates; and imposes a wholesale gas tax of 3.5 percent to replace the current 17.5 cent gas tax

*continued on page 11*

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# Sustainability and Communication

Christine Vrooman, Ankida Ridge Vineyards

When we decided to plant a vineyard on a small parcel of cleared forest land up high on a mountainside, one of the most exciting unknowns (and believe me, there were many) was how well the rocky, depleted soil would serve as home for the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay we were about to plant. We considered it virgin soil, having never been farmed, fertilized, manipulated, or treated in any way other than to serve as the food and foundation for a forest of trees.

We sent our soil off to be analyzed, but we needed no analysis to know our land was filled with rock! We hauled away several tons. We had a geologist visit and learned our site is a part of the greater Rockfish Valley Fault Zone (RVFZ), which has soil similar to several other area vineyards, but different from the typical Piedmont soils or the Coastal Plains where many good vineyards are planted.

We were intrigued by the soil component in grape growing. Soils and their role in creating quality wines are a perpetual source of discussion, debate and continued research, and testing, amending, and caring for the soil has been an important part of our viticulture practices.

Most agree that great wines can be made from grapes grown on all types of soils. The common denominator, however, for most great vineyards is that they are located on well-drained sites, whether they are on a slope or not. So both soil type and soil drainage capacities play roles in grape production. Can soil types affect flavor? Perhaps this can't be proven scientifically, but it seems many palates can differentiate wines by soil types (with one not necessarily being better than the other, but simply different). I recall hearing the highly regarded Virginia vintner, Jim Law, speaking at a recent conference in Pennsylvania on the subject of soils. He described a tasting he shared with Penn State's Mark Chien and others, of Cab Sauv, Cab Franc and Merlot, grown in Cheval Blanc (Bordeaux). All three grape varieties were grown in nearly identical sites and climate, but on three different soils (sand, gravel, and clay). Four people participated in the blind tasting, and after thirty minutes of going back and forth between the nine wines, each of them could pick out the soil type, but not necessarily the variety.

## Soil Philosophy

I asked Jim if he could summarize his philosophy on soil in the vineyard.

*"There are two fundamental impacts. The*



*One-third billion year old quartz vein in weathered charnokite from our vineyard site.*

*first is the visually measurable, which is the relationship of water and nitrogen to vine growth. If the vine is not balanced or does not experience hydric stress in mid-summer, the wine will be of less quality and in the case of reds exhibit vegetal flavors and a hard structure.*

*The second impact is only measured by the palate and it is the personality, flavor/structure profile and ultimately the quality of the wine. These evaluations can only come from years of winegrowing experience, cultivating on the same ground and keeping vineyard blocks separate in the cellar."*

At that same workshop, coordinated by Mark Chien, one of the speakers was Dr. Xavier Choné who spoke on the effects of vine water uptake, its timing throughout the season and the role it plays in the quality of fruit flavors. In his research summary:

*....soil influences vine water status through its water-holding capacity and, possibly, accessibility to the water table. The best vintages were those in which the water balance from flowering to harvest was most negative. The best soils were those on which water deficits resulted in earlier shoot-growth slackening, reduced berry size, and high grape sugar and anthocyanin concentrations, thereby increasing grape quality potential.<sup>1</sup>*

## Optimizing Soil's Influence

The perfect site is often hard to come by. Being on a slope helps with soil drainage, but not all vineyards are planted on slopes. The type of soil helps, but not all vineyards have been planted on the ideal soil for the cultivar selected. So how do we make the best with what we've got and produce wines of quality? We all know that the number of variables that go into making wine are too numerous to mention and that all of them can influence the

eventual wine quality. But of those variables that we can influence in the matters of soil, what can we do to optimize its influence positively on our wines? If we can't change the soil type or slope, can we affect microbial life and the role it plays in maintaining well-drained soils?

Mark Chien writes:

*The soil food web is relatively new to the viticulture lexicon. It refers to the great diversity of biological life that exists in the soil medium... Grape growers should be attentive to this underground world and employ practices that enhance and preserve the food web. Reducing chemical inputs, aerating soils, reducing soil compaction, improving soil drainage, and adding compost when needed are all practices that can contribute to the sustainability of the subterranean life.<sup>2</sup>*

We do have a new resource we can add to the mix, *The Sustainability Workbook*. By following the workbook's best management guidelines, we are improving our practices which can improve the quality of fruit grown under improved environmental conditions. Be sure to read Bill Frietag's column in this issue which provides an update on the Sustainability Workbook. Invest yourself in the time to review your best management practices via the upcoming online program. The rewards will show in your vineyards and the quality of wines we can craft in Virginia.

I asked viticulturist, Lucie Morton, if she had anything to add to the discussion. It was late in the evening and she agreed with all the above observations so felt brevity and levity were the better part of valor. Her quote: "Soil is the 'hood for grape roots which leads to the 'tude in the wine."

\*\*\*\*\*

1. Influence of Climate, Soil, and Cultivar on Terroir, Am. J. Enol. Vitic. 55:3 (2004)

2. <http://www.extension.org/pages/31032/vineyard-soils:-biology>

# Spray Dose Considerations

by Lucie Morton, Viticulturist

Viticulturist Lucie Morton discussed spray dose considerations during the winter technical meeting of the VVA. “One thing that bothers me,” she said at the outset, “is what does it mean to spray four pounds of an application per acre when vineyards are all so variable?” Her presentation, which she provided to Grape Press, elaborates on that point, among others.

## Introduction

The spray tank stew pot is expensive to fill. Sustainable growers will look to balance toxicity/irritation to people and ecosystems (socially responsible) and take measure of how to strategically deliver only what is necessary (financially important).

## Training systems matter

- Skinny VSP makes for efficient spraying and reduced fungal habitat
- Cane pruning reduces fungal habitat
- Lyre and other multidimensional canopies bring special challenge for spray coverage

## Sprayers

- Mist sprayers can lose material to drift but give good coverage with a small amount of water
- Recycling sprayers contain drift esp. early season and may use more water due to larger droplets and slower travel speed.
- Any sprayer needs to be well-maintained and calibrated carefully every year.
- Buy Dr. Andrew Landers book: <http://www.effectivespraying.com/>

## Spray math fundamentals:

Vineyard row length as a function of row spacing

Row width	Row length ft/acre	Difference%
9'	4,840	0
7'	6,223	+28
4'	10,890	+125

## Leaf Wall Area (LWA) for a 7 ft row spacing with skinny 4 ft canopy

- =2 dimensional LWA = 49, 800 sq ft per acre
- 7 foot row LWA is 14% greater than 8 foot rows (43, 560 sq ft)
- 7 foot row LWA is 23% greater than 9 foot rows (38,700 sq ft)

## Pounds, Ounces, Pints/Acre = Legalization of Imprecision!

According to Cornell fungicide researcher Dr. Wayne Wilcox (personal communication):

“The only meaningful units for discussing and comparing pesticide rates are permutations of pesticide dose per unit area of target” e.g., nanogram of pesticide per sq cm of leaf and/or cluster surface.

[FYI: a nanogram is one billionth of a gram = 0.000000001]

# A Busy Year for the General Assembly

continued from page 9

paid at the pump. It also dedicates funding generated from the potential passage of federal legislation requiring remote sellers (who don't claim nexus or a physical presence in VA) to collect sales and use tax from purchases from in-state customers. (Note: this legislation is pending in Congress.) This language also prohibits the imposition of tolls on I-95 south of Fredericksburg without prior approval of the legislature while providing Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads the ability to levy local taxes whose revenues would be dedicated to transportation funding.

**Water Quality Consolidation:** The House of Delegates and Senate also approved a measure leaving voluntary programs and district operations under the governance of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) rather than moving them to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as part of the original water quality consolidation bills, HB2048 (Delegate Beverly J. Sherwood) and SB1279 (Senator Emmet W. Hanger, Jr.). The final bill also addresses an important factor not to be overlooked -- that adequate funding and staffing remain for DCR to continue to administer these programs while others move over to DEQ. Both bills were on the desk of Governor McDonnell at press time.

**Wine Funding:** Amendments to the 2012-2014 budget were also approved as the 2013 General Assembly wrapped up its work. Tax proceeds from the sale of Virginia wine and cider are reflected in the budget and invested in \$1,779,086 in annual funding for the Virginia Wine Board and its marketing, education, and research efforts. In addition, language specifies the promotion of wine trails as a part of the “See Virginia First” program and includes funds for the research, development and the applied commercialization of specialty crops. Additional resources for the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund were included in this year’s budget amendments to support the success of this fund as well as continued funding for the Virginia Winery Distribution Company (VWDC).

“There are ‘only’ two problems with this: 1) Nobody knows what this dose actually is, at least not for most materials; and 2) Even if they did, it’s hard to translate that into use directions that you can put on a label.”

“Nevertheless, it all comes down to what any thinking person knows: If Vineyard A has twice the total leaf plus cluster area per acre as Vineyard B, it will need twice as much pesticide per acre to get the same degree of control, assuming that the same percentage of the applied material gets onto the intended target in each.”

For example: A full canopy of Concord can absorb 200 gal H2O/acre and need 4 lbs of Product X Whereas a “well-manicured” skinny VSP could be fine with 35 to 50 gal water/acre and 1 to 1.5 lbs of Product X.

## Factors for wide range in the “correct” dosage

- varietal susceptibility
- inoculum presence (proximity to trees/underbrush)
- vine density
- canopy density
- application timing
- application efficiency
- weather (esp. for spray intervals)

continued on page 12

## Spray dose

continued from page 11

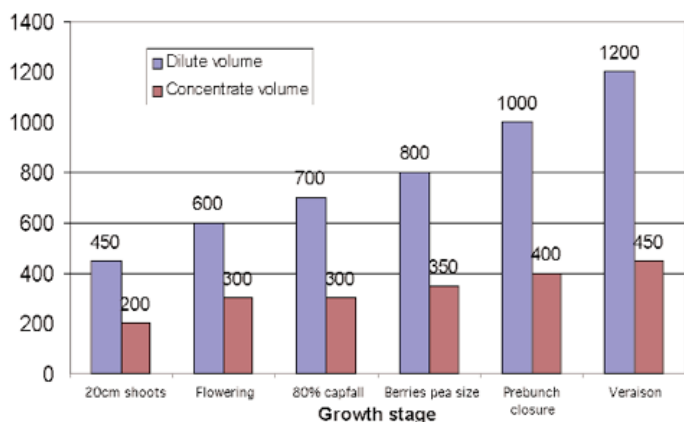
What to do: Aim for an “effective” concentration per volume of water, then seasonally increase the volume of water applied in proportion to the increase in total canopy volume (assuming the involvement of some constant for converting from volume to area)

### The Standard in Australia

First, they figure out how much water it would take to drench the canopy (that is, the dilute volume) and how much chemical material it would take. Then, they add that amount of material to whatever volume one is using. Thus at 20 cm shoot stage, if the label says 200 g/100 l then the concentrated amount would be 2.25 x 200 g/100 l or 450 grams per 100 liters of water.

### Note in round numbers: 100 l/ha = 10 gallons per acre (actual 10.7)

Figure. 1. From Cooperative Research Centre for Viticulture (<http://www.crcv.com.au>): Calculating chemical rates for vines.



### Water volume assumptions and product (Panthos, a fungicide spray) amount in Switzerland at 3 growth stages

Post budbreak: 600 l/ha water with 0.5 kg/ha

Bloom: 1 200 l/ha with 1 kg ha

Veraison: 1 600 l/ha with 2 kg/ha

### No European standard for: Min – Max rates.

(Note: this is slated to change with Ecophyto 2018, the plan for reducing by half the amount of pesticides and plant protection products used in France by the year 2018.) A graphic showing maximum and minimum doses for 17 different powdery and downy mildew products in Germany, Spain, Italy and Switzerland compared to France can be found online at:

[http://www.vignevin.com/fileadmin/users/ifv/actualites/Lettre\\_Oct12/Doses\\_VignePHYTOMA3.pdf](http://www.vignevin.com/fileadmin/users/ifv/actualites/Lettre_Oct12/Doses_VignePHYTOMA3.pdf).

The article, *Dose de produits phyto autorisees sure vigne en Europe, vont elles s'harmoniser?* In *Phytoma* No. 656, Aug-Sept 2012 pp 37-41 by Sebastian Codis, et al., is written in French, but the graphic (Figure 1 on p. 4) is self-explanatory. FYI, France is represented in the graphic by the 100 percent line.

There is a cool website in France where you can put in information about your vineyard and locations and get recommendations for the optimal dosage of powdery mildew material: see Optidose at <http://www.vignevin-epicure.com>. I am sure Tony and Mizuho will be soon be setting this up for all our fungal diseases here in VA!

## VVA Trip to Bordeaux: Part 1

By Jim Benefiel, Benevino Vineyards

Twenty-six dedicated vine growers placed their trust in VVA for focused travel and braved February winds and weather to alight in Bordeaux — amid the first measurable snow in several years — for a week of vineyard, winery and tasting room tours, along with industry-expert lectures and demonstrations.

In addition to touring chateaux, we visited the Institute for Viticulture and Vinology (ISVV), the Farm Bureau (where extensive vine growing research and vendor/supplier certification is conducted), a nursery, a growers association, and the Ecole du Vin. Our tour operator provided two dinners and all lunches (in postcard villages, and one at a chateau), plus a night in Paris at either end of the week.

Although only about one-tenth the size of Virginia (i.e., equal to a few Virginia counties), the region adjacent to the city of Bordeaux consists of 12 distinct major AOCs (akin to U.S. AVAs) and 20 minor AOCs, where roughly 8,000 properties tend 200,000 acres of vines and produce about 40 million cases of wine annually. Each of these figures is down about a third from its peak of a decade ago. Although the average vineyard size is thus 25 acres across the entire region, AOC averages range from nearly 200 acres in the beautiful estates of Sauternes to 20 acres in St. Emilion, and down to perhaps five acres in the minor AOCs. We were told that the region employs approximately one vineyard worker per 3 hectares (equivalent to 7.2 acres), which is very similar to Virginia's 1 FTE per 7.5 acres.

continued on page 13

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# VVA Trip to Bordeaux

*continued from page 12*

Although production is limited by regulation to about 2.5 to 3.0 equivalent tons/acre, it is often 2.0 tons/acre or less in practice. The reasons for low yields are principally because the soil has been depleted by continuous grapevine cultivation for at least 400 years, irrigation is prohibited, fertilization is limited, and rainfall is relatively low (one-third less than in Virginia). Though we were told that fertilization is typically via shredded prunings, compost or cow manure, we saw several instances of chemical nitrogen fertilizer.

## Intense Cultivation

Vines are intensely cultivated — up to 4,000 per acre, or 1-meter-by-1-meter spacing. As an aside, because of the close spacing, some vineyards (and not just the small ones) are bringing draft horses back into the vineyards for select tasks, and report that it provides a collateral benefit of reduced compaction.)

Training is either cane pruning or combination cane and head pruning on low wire, from 1 to 2 feet off the ground. Low fruiting wire minimizes the expense of trellis posts — often only 4-foot long 2X2 wooden stakes barely pushed into the ground. Mechanical harvesting at the larger estates takes its toll on trellis stakes — we saw many replacement stakes being set out.

Growers are able to get away with low fruiting wires because of the nearness of large bodies of water, thus minimizing the risk of late spring frosts. And continual human habitation for the last 1,500 years has largely eliminated the grape-eating wild mammal population—they long ago became dinner. So don't try low-fruiting wires at home!

I never saw more than 12 buds per vine (meter), which left up to one-third of the fruiting wire bare. The pebbly-soiled Medoc vines showed eight canes per meter, and the Sauternes only three. Vines were commonly stripped to one cluster per shoot, and canopy heights ran 1 to 1.25 meters, so that a single leaf layer creates 1.5 square meters of leaf area per kilogram of fruit produced.

Note that an extrapolation for Virginia's two clusters per shoot would lead to 2 meters per shoot, and that the local recommendation of 8 square centimeters per gram of fruit suggests similar shoot length, even with differences in climate (to be discussed later).

## Spacing

Sauternes rows were planted 1 meter apart, Medoc perhaps to 1.25 meter, and St. Emilion 1.5 meters. The yield limits cited earlier are

established at the beginning of each season and are fixed across each AOC, regardless of the row spacing; i.e., the total length of fruiting wire per hectare. If you run the numbers, the result is ½ bottle per vine in Medoc and 1 glass per vine in Sauternes.

We continually asked why so much fruiting wire was left bare (even bi-directional cane pruning left one-third of the wire bare) and why they stripped shoots to one cluster. The answer to both was twofold: first, the depleted soil and aged vines severely limits the yield per vine that can reasonably be expected to mature; and second, declining domestic consumption means that yields must be limited if prices are to be maintained.

Even though close to the ocean, Bordeaux receives only about two-thirds of the rainfall that we Virginians do. However, the oceanic influence does give them much less summer sunshine than us, so ripening is often a struggle.

Dr. Jean-Phillippe Roby of the ISVV, who has visited Virginia, noted that Cabernet Sauvignon is grown in the coolest part of Bordeaux (he referred to it as “the fridge”), because that part (Medoc, Haut Medoc) has the best drained soils in the region. The soil consists principally of small pebbles, gravel and cobble stones deposited by retreating ice age glaciers. I have seen gravel vineyards in California, Washington State and Pennsylvania, but have yet to see one in Virginia. For those of you considering planting Cabernet Sauvignon, consider the consequences.

Dr. Roby repeated a statement delivered at one annual VVA meeting that truly outstanding vintages occur where vines constantly struggle to ripen them before the lack of heat shuts down photosynthesis or fall rains dilute the flavors. He noted that many growers use relatively vigorous 5BB or SO4 rootstocks — specifically to delay ripening. Recall that their problem with vigor is not excess.

As an aside, several of us noted that many Virginia growers seek early ripening varieties (four to six weeks before the first frost) in order to harvest, to minimize the threat of hurricanes.

One of our group noted that Pomerol/St. Emilion (P/SE) shares much more similarity with much of Virginia (e.g., the east slope of the Blue Ridge and Piedmont) than does the Medoc. The P/SE soils contain much more clay; the climate is several degrees warmer (up 750 GDDs) and the properties are smaller (~20 acres) than the Medoc. In P/SE, Merlot predominates; Cabernet Franc takes over where

limestone outcrops. This reinforces a growing consensus that Merlot and Cabernet Franc are much better suited for Virginia than Cabernet Sauvignon.

## Diseases of Concern

The principal disease of concern was listed as Esca. Renewing trunks every 10 years is a recommended practice, as this is the frequency of winter temperatures below -5F. (In Virginia, such temperatures occur approximately once every three years or better in the Piedmont and west.) The next disease of concern is Botrytis, and many growers limit control to the single early season spray. Sauternes, of course, seek Botrytis for its honeyed dessert wine, but the fungus doesn't present every year. Perhaps there is a market niche for cultivating and exporting the Botrytis that regularly strikes my Riesling.

Growers are able to manage the mildews, but wet years lead to rots. With open canopies and low rainfall, growers can get by with only six reported sprays per year. Grapevine yellows is unknown, and no one cited Pierce's Disease, even though winters are relatively mild (average minimum winter temperature ~20 to 25 F).

With low disease pressure, it's also not surprising that clonal research is focusing on improving wine characteristics rather than reducing disease susceptibility. Researchers noted that, although there is some genetic engineering underway, clones are largely selected from sentinel vines in identified blocks.

Again, because of low disease pressure, vines often age to 45 years, giving father and son sufficient time to identify superior performing vines. There was a decided preference for old vines, even though we saw many replacements (but those were typically in marginal AOCs). Observing the low-yielding old vines, I suspect that we Americans would have ripped them out long ago to increase yield.

*Stay tuned for part 2 of VVA's Bordeaux trip in the next issue of the Grape Press.*



# Virginia Vineyards Association Grape Press

## In Search of Virginia Viognier

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uses oak and ML conversion in the old world style. There are many wineries that share the new world style of tank fermentation without ML and with lees ageing in neutral oak. For me the brighter, less unctuous style provides more of those heady aromatics so vividly described by writers like Jancis Robinson.

### **A Virginia Style of Viognier**

There are so many challenges to growing Viognier in Virginia from both the viticultural

and the winemaking perspectives that if we can develop a 'Virginia style' that is unique to us it would be to all our advantages. We should not be trying to reproduce a Condrieu and for my money the lighter, zesty style that is not mellowed with ML and oak is the way for Virginia to go. It was that style that caught the attention of Steven Spurrier who has gone on to champion the cause of Virginia wine.

The real challenge then, and it might not be possible, is for the growers and winemakers to

create those conditions that guarantee quality, consistency and a uniquely Virginia style of Viognier that will establish and reinforce the gains that we have already made in the international market and for us to remain competitive in the burgeoning global markets. Whether the Virginia wine industry can pull together to control quality standards and develop a Virginia style Viognier ultimately remains to be seen.



## Calendar

### **Summer Technical Meeting and Social June 11, 2013:**

#### **Annual Summer Technical Morning Session Steep Terrain Grape Growing**

RdV Vineyards, Delaplane, VA,

#### **Annual Summer Technical Afternoon Session Steep Terrain Grape Growing**

Glen Manor, Front Royal, VA

#### **Summer Social**

Rappahannock Cellars, Huntly, VA

### **EXCHANGE**

Due to the large number of items for sale, I would direct our members to the following web site:

**Virginiavineyards  
association.com**

#### **Editors note:**

**Please take note of the change of email address for our office manager Katie Meeks  
vavineyardsassoc@gmail.com**