

# GRAPE PRESS

Spring 2020

The Quarterly Newsletter of the VIRGINIA VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION

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## VVA Wraps Up Growers' Meeting

Attendees at the 2020 VVA Winter Technical Meeting & Trade Show in February participated in workshops and educational tastings and honored one of their own as Carl Tinder, right, owner of Tinder Cattle & Vineyard, was named Grower of the Year. For more, see Page 7.



Photos above by Bob Garsson; below left, by Tracy Kirkman; below, by Chris Garsson.



The annual meeting, held this year at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville, featured a wine reception, left, where attendees could share their wines, and a trade show, above, with exhibits from vendors indoors and out.

## Staying Ahead of Phomopsis This Spring

### Early Protection Is Key, Says Grape Pathologist

By Mizuho Nita  
*Grape Pathologist, Virginia Tech*

One of the diseases you need to consider this time of the year is Phomopsis cane and leaf spot. It causes minor leaf spots, which are more evident to our eyes, but the more critical damage is caused by necrotic lesions on shoots and rachis. It also causes berry rot, but that disease is not common with wine grapes because of our spray programs.

Materials for black rot and downy mildew are often effective against Phomopsis. Thus, the fungicide coverage for these diseases is also working to manage Phomopsis, especially later in the spring and early summer. Some cultivars, such as Viognier and Seyval Blanc, are more susceptible to Phomopsis than the others.

Phomopsis typically takes a while to establish itself in the vineyard. It may take five to six years for Phomopsis to become noticeable if you start a new vineyard. However, once this disease is established in a vineyard, it is difficult to get rid of.

The fungus survives in canes and trunks

*See PHOMOPSIS on page 6*

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## REGIONAL REPORTS

► **NORTHERN VA.:** “The coldest temperature recorded at my place was 16 above zero. We only had six days below 20 degrees this entire winter.”

**By Dean Triplett**

*Greenstone Vineyard*

**A**s I look out the window and see daffodils reaching skyward, the weeping willow pushing its yellow-green future leaves, and the flowering cherry getting ready to do just that, I’m pretty sure that winter, such as it was, is nearly over as I write this report at the end of February. I repeat, the END of February!

So much for the winter that wasn’t. Except for the month of November, which was slightly below normal, temperatures from December until today have been mostly above normal. The coldest temperature recorded at my place was 16 above zero. We only had six days below 20 degrees this entire winter.

I’ve recorded a total of roughly 10 inches of precipitation this winter with just 4 inches of snow in two events. In both events, the snow that did fall was gone in a day or two. While these temperatures are a blessing with respect to cold damage to vines, I am concerned a bit about the effects they’ll have on insect populations this growing season.

Also, Pierce’s Disease will probably continue its march north in our state, certainly if this trend continues into the future. This is also assuming that winter won’t rear its ugly head in March.

The good news, I guess, is that night time temperatures have been mostly in the 30s and low 40s, slowing the vines a bit, and the long range forecast doesn’t seem to call for a major “Polar Vortex” to head south any time soon.

Pruning is underway in most of the vineyards in our area. I’m done at my place with some final tying up required. I don’t know of anyone seeing any winter damage so far.

Replanting and new plantings are planned by a number of growers in our region, including myself. Zephaniah Farm Vineyards will be replanting a total of nearly 600 Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot vines as well as putting in a new planting of 350

Chelois vines at another vineyard they lease.

Chelois is a blue-black hybrid grape, or as Bill Hatch likes to call them, “Heirloom Grapes.” Grown mostly in the Finger Lakes region of New York, the grape holds its acidity well. Like many heirloom grapes, it can be prone to overcropping, so yields need to be kept in check. It breaks bud late and ripens mid-season, so it should fit in well for our region.

### Grape Hybridization

If you attended the VVA Winter Technical Meeting this year, you got the chance to see what’s new in grape hybridization programs in the U.S. and abroad in an effort to come up with varieties that hopefully can be a better match to our changing climate. Also, we heard and tasted the results of experimental work being done with the growing of novel vinifera varieties.

Some of these varieties might work in our climate conditions and hopefully, in some cases, give us a chance to reduce the chemical inputs that we use now. I found it very interesting that growers and their various associations in Italy, Germany and even France are changing their views of what they might be allowed to grow.

Given the near total inability of growers to break with what has been the almost totalitarian authority of the governments of various EU countries (at least by U.S. standards) pertaining to what their growers can and can’t grow, it’s amazing that they are now on the cutting edge of a number of these new breeding programs.

As for me, I’ll be planting 250 Albarino vines on 101-14 and 72 Valvin Muscat vines on 3309. The Valvin Muscat vines, a Cornell University release, make a nice complementary blender with Muscat Ottonel. While not displaying quite as an intensely “Muscaty” aroma as Muscat Ottonel, it produces very consistent yields, with slightly higher acidity than its parent vine.

In a previous report, I wrote about

*See NORTHERN on page 3*

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# NORTHERN VA.

*NORTHERN, from page 2*

Andrea and Josh Richter, who are putting in a vineyard west of Lucketts in Loudoun County. After clearing forest and scrub brush and establishing cover crops, they will be planting 2,500 Cabernet Sauvignon FPS clone 47.1 on 101-14 vines this April. As I mentioned in my other article, they have a beautiful site at 900 plus feet and I'm very interested in following the progress of their substantial efforts.

### European Red Mite

An issue that came up in my vineyard toward the end of last season was a spike in the European Red Mite (ERM) population, particularly in my Merlot. I've had issues with this in the past and it's the main reason I haven't used the insecticide Carbaryl in years.

At the VVA meeting this year, Doug

Pfeiffer, professor and fruit entomologist at Virginia Tech, mentioned that the use of the herbicide Rely can be harmful to predator mites which feed on ERM. I have used Rely as my weed control of choice for quite a while now. So it would appear that I've been probably encouraging the outbreak of ERM all these years.

With that in mind, I will be putting down a dormant oil spray in my vineyard in hopes of suffocating the ERM eggs. In a phone conversation with Doug, he said that, while dormant oil sprays have been effective with tree crops like apples, grapes — with their shaggy bark — provide more protection for the eggs than the smooth-skinned apple bark.

I also had a conversation with Jeanette Smith and her recommendation was to attach a spray gun to my sprayer and really soak the vines. Cordon, trunks and spurs would all need to be completely saturated to be effective.

Doug agreed with this approach as well. He also mentioned that predatory mites and ERM move up into the canopy during the May-June time frame. So, it would seem that early season weed control is the most critical time for harming predatory mites. Rely herbicide could then be used later in the season.

Also, spraying a narrow strip under the trellis (mine is usually only 2 feet or so wide) is less harmful to the predatory mites than a wider area as is the case in orchards. As a famous person once said, "It's always something".

With the beginning of spring comes all the hard work that we've had a break from for most of the winter. We had an excellent harvest followed by an "easy" winter.

Is it too much to ask for our luck to continue in 2020? With the way this year is looking on so many other fronts, I sure hope our luck holds.

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► **EASTERN VA.:** “Periods of warm spells ... resulted in some cut vines weeping for a few days.”

By Paul Krop  
Good Luck Cellars

Many of us across the state had an opportunity recently to compare notes on our growing conditions. This occurred in late February at the VVA Winter Technical Meeting in Charlottesville.

The winter meeting is always a good time to catch up with how others are coping with the variables of weather coming our way in different parts of the state. But weather is only part of the mix, with elevation, soils, proximity to large bodies of water and geographic north-south differences to be considered.

Our Good Luck Cellars’ location at 90 feet above sea level and 3 miles from the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay are our local topographic features. The oldest sections of our 25 acres date back to 2005, while the newest vines were planted in 2016.

Our most successful varieties measured by crop load and quality of fruit have included Chardonnay, Vidal Blanc, Seyval Blanc, Petit Verdot and Chambourcin. Less successful varieties would include Chardonnay (more cold sensitive) and Viognier (less tonnage per acre and less reliable fruit quality per acre).

The moderate-success category includes our Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Traminette, Norton and Vignoles. However, we would not remove any of these latter five because they have a strong following among our growing staff of fieldsmen and fieldswomen, as well as our consumers.

Norton has won over a growing number of patrons because of its bold flavors and color and also because it is a native Virginian. Traminette has a group of followers that love it for its floral cachet. And both of these can blend nicely with some of our whites and reds.

**Show Off Your Vineyard On the VVA Website**

If you’d like to see your vineyard showcased on the VVA website, [virginiavineyardsassociation.org](http://virginiavineyardsassociation.org), send us a photo of your vines, your grapes or your harvest. Email your photo to [cgarsson@gmail.com](mailto:cgarsson@gmail.com) along with details about the photo and who should be credited for taking it (please be sure you have the rights to have the photo published).

Others in the Chesapeake area have variations of this theme and are affected by bay and ocean temperatures. Discussion with Rock Stephens of the Eastern Shore and Keith Meenan of Vault Field Vineyards in Kinsale, 32 miles northwest of Good Luck Cellars in Kilmarnock, describe a winter somewhat wetter than average and certainly warmer than average. Rock’s highest recorded temp this year was 71.4 degrees in January, and the lowest temps ranged down to 23.6 degrees in November, 22.6 degrees in December, 25.1 degrees in January and 22.2 degrees in February.

At our vineyard, we generally perform our pre-pruning in January followed by final pruning in early March. Periods of warm spells in early February this year resulted in some cut vines weeping for a few days.

Most of our varieties are spur pruned. We use VSP with cordons at 36-42 inches and we planted at 9-5 or 9-4 spacing. Our average count/acre is 800-900 vines. We are generally

oriented slightly west of true south and we did have to do some leveling of slope angles where hills were banked up to a 30-degree incline.

In the future, I think we will orient new rows up and down the hills rather than follow sun inclination/declination with sunrise/sunset. This makes row orientation easier for later planting, vine trimming, hedging, etc. I feel that the lack of equal sun exposure on both sides of the trellis and vine may be a relatively small loss, especially if good leaf trimming and cluster exposure are followed.

Each year has been a learning experience, going from variety to variety, and considering changes in weather, availability of anti-fungals, management of ground cover and nitrogen supplementation.

We grape farmers get a regular infusion of stimulating information for our gray matter and find that this industry is a delight to work in. Our Virginia Tech viticulturists, oenologists, and industry suppliers deserve our thanks.



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► **CENTRAL VA:** “We have not had any nights where the mercury dipped below 10 degrees.”

By Grayson Poats  
*Valley Road Vineyards*

Mild temperatures continue to be the dominant feature of our winter weather here in Central Virginia for 2019 and 2020. In fact, I have a hard time referring to this weather as winter, as it seems more like early spring much of the time.

Yes, there have been a few cold stretches, but they don't stick around for long and pretty soon we are back to above-average temperatures for this time of year. My average daily high temperature in December here in Afton was 52 degrees, while we recorded averages of 45 and 54 degrees in January and February, respectively. Average nightly lows for those same three months have been 33.5, 33.5 and 34.9 degrees.

We have not had any nights where the mercury dipped below 10 degrees and only two nights where it fell below 20 degrees, one of those being Jan. 22, and the other being Feb. 15. The temperature dropped to 16 degrees on each of those nights.

The forecast looking forward shows more mild weather ahead. All of this gives me multiple areas of concern, the first is that the lack of cold nights leaves us vulnerable to Pierce's Disease, which as we have been told over the years by Dr. Tony Wolf and his fine staff, is best kept at bay by multiple nighttime temperatures that get below 10-15 degrees.

As noted, this has not happened nor at

this stage do I want it to. I won't want to run the risk of repeating the terrible troubles caused by the Polar Vortex incidents of 2014 and 2015, which killed the vines of many Virginia grape growers and split trunks leading to Crown Gall for many more.

No, at this point the best scenario would be a long stretch of what used to be considered average nighttime temperatures for this time of year with no drastic swings up or down.

The second area of concern is an early bud break that would leave us at risk of a spring frost for a longer than normal stretch of time. On the bright side, it has generally been fine weather for pruning and for any other outdoor tasks on your "To Do" list.

Not surprisingly, other growers that I've talked to have expressed the same concerns. Jeff Sanders of Glass House Winery said that he became very nervous about an early bud break when he saw water flowing from his canes during pruning in early February. I can attest that the same thing was happening here in Afton in mid-January.

**Pierce's Disease Concerns**

Jeff also said he has had no extreme cold events and while he is pleased that his vines are in no danger of suffering cold damage, the lack of cold nights also leaves him concerned in regards to Pierce's Disease and that an occurrence of Pierce's Disease may be a "foregone conclusion."

If you have had PD in your vineyard in the past, you may see an uptick this year. If you have been fortunate, like myself, and have

not had PD in your vineyard (although I have seen it at previously managed vineyards) I would suggest that you read up on it and keep a sharp eye out for it.

A level of chemical control is possible, I believe, at least to slow the spread to other parts of the vineyard. Intrepid, which I use for control of cutworms and Grape Berry Moth, is also labeled for sharpshooters that are the vector for the causal bacterium responsible for PD. Monitor your vines often and keep your fingers crossed for a cold winter next year.

**Innovative Approaches**

Aside from all the wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth over the worries of a too-warm winter, some interesting things are happening in Central Virginia vineyards in 2020.

One of these comes from Christine Vrooman of Ankida Ridge Vineyards in Amherst County, who has always been a leader in efforts to farm sustainably.

The Vrooman family is continuing to fine-tune their weed control program with a goal of being herbicide free. Toward this end, they use sheep in their vineyard at various times of the year for weed control (and I imagine to increase their vineyard cuteness factor immeasurably!).

In the past, they have removed the sheep from the vineyard at budswell and put them back in after harvest when the leaves have completed senescence.

This year, they are auditioning two products to cover the periods when sheep in the vineyard have been a no-no.

The first product is a muzzle for their sheep that keeps their necks and heads properly positioned so that they can't feed on non-target areas in the vineyard; like the grapes! The muzzle lifts up when heads are down grazing, but closes when they lift their heads to browse the vines.

The second is a hand-held, battery-powered cultivator that they are considering using as a practical and effective means to eliminate weeds under the trellis. One concern is it might create erosion under the vines on their sloped vineyard. They prefer not to cultivate deeply, only wanting to rake away the surface weeds while their new vineyard block is getting established, so they are hopeful this product will accomplish this goal.

I wish her success with these products and told her I would check back with her during the year to see if one or both has helped them achieve their very worthwhile goal of being an herbicide-free vineyard.

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# Getting a Jump on Phomopsis

PHOMOPSIS, from page 1

that were infected in previous years, and it can also cause damage to cordons and trunks. During the spring, it will produce spores on the surface of infected tissues, and these spores are splashed by rain onto new shoots or leaves.

Luckily, the pathogen (*Phomopsis viticola*) produces spores mainly during the springtime. Thus, unlike the other diseases we face, there is only one dominant infection period throughout the season. Because of that, the spread of *Phomopsis* does not happen as rapidly as other grapevine fungal diseases, such as downy mildew.

*Phomopsis* spores can cause infection in relatively cooler environments (the upper 40s). Thus, springtime rain events are ideal for *Phomopsis* to produce spores and cause infection. Unfortunately, we do not have curative fungicides for *Phomopsis* management.

Therefore, it is vital to protect young tissues when they come out from the older canes and trunks. Since shoots will proliferate quickly, you may need to spray 1-2 times against *Phomopsis*, depending on how much rain we receive.

If rain events are coming into the picture after bud break, mancozeb (FRAC = M3, also marketed as Penncozeb, Dithane, Manzate, among others), Ziram (FRAC = M3), and captan (FRAC = M4) are useful protective materials against *Phomopsis*. In a typical year, one or two applications, starting from 1-2 inch shoot length, will be sufficient. After that period, your downy mildew or black rot applications, which are applied in the late spring, will cover *Phomopsis*.

QoI (FRAC = 11), such as Abound and Pristine, as well as SDHI (FRAC = 7), such as Luna Experience, Miravis, and Aprovia, work, too. However, you probably don't want to use them this early in the season because you will need these materials for the latter part of the season to control other diseases. Once again, protection is the only means of chemical management because no materials are effective after the infection.

The other disease that you may need to consider around this time of the year is anthracnose, which is more common with certain hybrid species. Typical symptoms are black necrotic lesions on leaves, shoots, and fruits, and often, the black lesion has an ash-colored center, as if you burnt the leaf or shoot tissue with a cigarette. The management strategies will be similar to that of *Phomopsis*, and Topsin-M (FRAC = 1) is also known to be effective. A good article with more information

on anthracnose can be found on the Michigan State Extension website.

A dormant application of lime sulfur (10 percent in our study, or 1 percent of a newer product called Sulforix in a study done by Dr. Annemiek Schilder at Michigan State University) should be effective against *Phomopsis* and anthracnose. We also tested copper, but it was not effective.

However, the efficacy of the lime sulfur application is not strong enough to allow you to skip any preventative fungicide applications to be sprayed soon after bud break. That's because, even with a dormant application, you still need to protect your shoots when they emerge.

With the corrosiveness of lime sulfur, it is hard to justify the money and time. Moreover, it will be another application of a fungicide, which we try to reduce. It is more effective to spray mancozeb or captan soon after bud break. Thus, I would recommend a dormant application of lime sulfur only if you have a serious issue of *Phomopsis* and/or anthracnose, and you need an extra kick to your regular preventative application after bud break.

The dormant application is less likely to be very effective against downy or powdery because both are polycyclic diseases with a rapid secondary cycle. Even if you can knock down the initial inoculum, they can produce the next round of spores rapidly, especially under favorable conditions.

Also, the winter survival structures of these pathogens are very tough, so I don't think a fungicide application is the best approach. The dormant application of lime sulfur is used for ripe rot prevention in Japan. However, there are not much data to confirm whether the efficacy is valid or not. If you are interested in this, please let me know so that we can set up a trial ([nita24@vt.edu](mailto:nita24@vt.edu)).

## Zoecklein to Lead Study Tour in Burgundy

*(Editor's note: Dr. Bruce Zoecklein will lead a technical study tour of "The Terroirs of Burgundy" Dec. 5-12, 2020.)*

By Dr. Bruce Zoecklein  
Professor Emeritus, Virginia Tech

Many European winegrowers seem to understand that the sustainability of their operation is inextricably linked to the ability to express the terroir of their site. The concept of terroir centers around the belief that a vigneron might produce a wine that expresses the inherent and distinguishing characteristic of a particular vineyard site and the uniqueness of the vintage. Burgundy is based on this perceived exceptional quality and has maintained its status and influence over the years, attesting to the concept of terroir.

However, attempts to separate the kaleidoscope of variables including geology, geomorphology, soil, climate, the biology of the vine and human interventions have proven difficult due to the interconnected complexity of interactions. Indeed, it would seem that there is an ample number of new world winegrowers that deny its true existence. Some suggest that terroir is primarily a marketing term that mixes extrinsic and intrinsic wine properties. Join us on this tour of Burgundy to explore the many facets of terroir.

**"Technical Study Tour: The Terroirs of Burgundy," Dec. 5-12, 2020:**

**Where:** Chablis, the Côte de Nuits and the Côte de Beaune.

**Who:** For commercial grape growers and winemakers.

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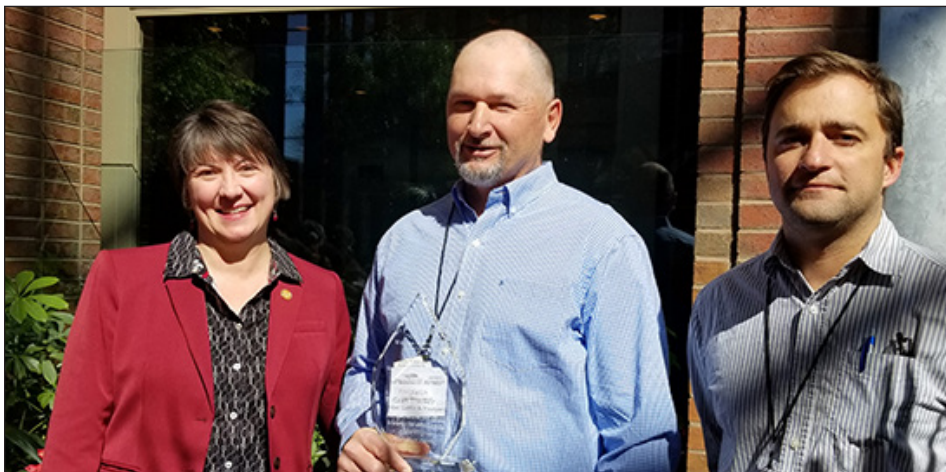
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# VVA Wraps Up Growers' Meeting



Bob Garsson

From left: Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring; VVA Grower of the Year Carl Tinder, owner of Tinder Cattle & Vineyard; and VVA President Nate Walsh.

## VVA Names Carl Tinder Its Grower of the Year

By Bob Garsson  
Grape Press

Carl Tinder, owner of Tinder Cattle & Vineyard, has been named Grower of the Year by the Virginia Vineyards Association (VVA).

Carl has become an important force in the growth of Virginia's wine industry, said VVA President Nate Walsh in announcing the award at the association's Winter Technical Meeting in Charlottesville on Feb. 21.

"In addition to planting 32 acres of vines on his own properties, Carl has helped numerous other growers plant and maintain thriving vineyards in Central Virginia, providing fruit for some of our most expressive wines," Nate said.

"Carl Tinder has played a vital role in Virginia's growing wine industry," said Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, who presented the award. "His company has planted over 275,000 vines in Virginia and, in 2019, his harvest service picked and delivered over 400 tons of fruit to multiple wineries."

Ms. Ring took note of the growth and importance of the wine industry to Virginia. "The Virginia wine industry is a booming industry in the Commonwealth, contributing \$1.37 billion to our robust economy," she said.

"I am proud to say we currently have almost 330 wineries and 32 cideries in Virginia," she said, adding that, "this number will continue to rise and individuals from all over the world will continue to travel to Virginia to experience our wines."

Carl graduated from Virginia Tech in 1995

with a BS in Animal Science and a minor in Agricultural Economics. He began managing Adventure Farm in Earlysville, Va., for Mary Jane Chisholm. At the time, Adventure Farm was a 1,100-acre cattle and timber operation that was later expanded to over 4,000 acres.

In 2005, encouraged by Felicia Rogan of Oakencroft Vineyard and Winery, Carl planted two acres of vines on family property in Nelson County that is now known as Grape Lawn and, in 2006, he planted four acres of vines at the Adventure Farm site. Today, those vineyards have grown to 20 acres and 12 acres, respectively.

In 2010, he worked with well-known viticulturist and consultant Chris Hill to plant and install a vineyard at Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyards, North Garden. That experience, he said, inspired in him a passion to help other growers.

Carl began providing services to new and established vineyards and, in 2014, he began operating as Tinder Cattle & Vineyard, a full-service vineyard management company.

He expressed optimism about the future of Virginia wine. "Tinder Cattle & Vineyard looks forward to servicing the vineyard industry of Central Virginia for years to come and to a 2020 vintage that continues to show the world what Virginia has to offer," he said.

Since 2005, the VVA has been pleased to honor one of its members with the annual Grower of the Year Award. Recipients are active participants in the Virginia viticulture community with a track record of commitment and service to the industry.

## Two New Members Elected to VVA Board

In balloting conducted this winter, Emily Belcher of Chateau Morrisette has been elected Secretary of the VVA Board and Jeanette Smith of VineSmith Vineyard Services has been elected an at-large member.

The election results were announced during the VVA's Winter Technical Meeting in February. During the meeting, VVA President Nate Walsh also thanked outgoing board members Jim Benefiel and Carrington King for their work on behalf of the VVA.

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# Congrats to 2020 Cup Medalists!

The 2020 Governor's Cup was awarded to 868 Estate Vineyards for its 2017 Vidal Blanc Passito during the annual Governor's Cup celebration in Richmond on Feb. 25.

"I am thrilled to award the Governor's Cup to Carl DiManno and congratulate the whole team at 868 Estate Vineyards on their sweet finish," said Gov. Ralph Northam. "The Vidal Blanc Passito embodies both the experimentation and artistry that has made Virginia the leading East Coast destination for wine. This year's Governor's Cup case is a strong reflection of our world-class wine industry and the distinctive wines being produced in our Commonwealth."

All wines in the competition must be made from Virginia fruit, but the 868 Estate Vidal Blanc Passito is the first winner to be made entirely from Loudoun County fruit.

The Vidal Blanc Passito is one of 12 wines to be included in the prestigious Governor's Cup case for 2020. The other wines are:

- ▶ Afton Mountain Vineyards Tradition (2017)
- ▶ Barboursville Vineyards Octagon (2014)
- ▶ Barboursville Vineyards Vermentino Reserve (2018)
- ▶ Delaplane Cellars Williams Gap (2017)
- ▶ Lake Anna Winery Tannat (2017)
- ▶ Michael Shaps Wineworks Meritage (2016)
- ▶ Pippin Hill Vineyards Petit Verdot (2017)
- ▶ Pollak Vineyards Cabernet Franc Reserve (2017)
- ▶ Pollak Vineyards Smuggler (2017)
- ▶ Rockbridge Vineyard V d'Or (2017)
- ▶ Shenandoah Vineyards Shenandoah Reserve Red (2017)

For a full list of gold, silver and bronze medalists in this year's Governor's Cup competition, [click here](#).

## Industry Awards

The Virginia Wineries Association has announced its industry awards:

- ▶ Virginia Wine Person of the Year: Justin Rose of Rosemont Winery.
- ▶ David King Advocate of the Year: George Hodson, CEO of Veritas Vineyards and Winery, president and principal of Flying Fox Vineyards, and president of the Monticello Wine Trail.
- ▶ Gordon Murchie Lifetime Achievement Award: Randy Phillips of Cave Ridge Vineyard.

# General Assembly Concludes 2020 Session

By James S. Turpin, *Lobbyist*  
*Virginia Wineries Association Collective*

The Virginia General Assembly completed its 2020 session in early March. Over the course of 60 days, a record number of measures were considered. A number of these were of importance to the Virginia wine industry. These included bills impacting ABC, agriculture, the environment, and workforce issues. Several measures were carried over to 2021.

## ABC

There was a significant updating and streamlining of the ABC licensing structure. This included reducing the number and classes of retail licenses. At the same time, there were comparatively minor changes to the manufacturer (farm winery) license. This included a small increase in fees for the first time in at least 10 years.

The VWA Collective was successful in defending the privileges accorded to farm wineries. These included challenges from commercial wineries and other agribusiness-related businesses.

## Agriculture

The General Assembly approved an increase to the state minimum wage. There was an attempt to remove the agricultural exemption

which would have adversely impacted both the H2A program as well as the availability of agricultural labor. VWA allied with the Virginia Agribusiness Council and the Virginia Farm Bureau to preserve agriculture's unique labor needs.

VWA was also successful in defeating an effort to increase restrictions on the use of air cannons to repel migratory birds.

## Workforce

In addition to the efforts to increase the minimum wage, the General Assembly also considered repealing the right to work law, requiring non-union employers to make payments to unions, and requirements for paid sick leave. All of these measures were defeated. However, the trend and pressure is clearly on the side of increased worker rights and costs.

## Environment

The major environmental initiative of the session was the Chesapeake Bay Water Improvement Initiative. VWA and its agricultural allies were active in the efforts leading up to the General Assembly session. In the end, the measures that passed were ones that established new long-term goals but not mandates.

The General Assembly also created a local option tax on plastic bags. Paper bags were exempted. Due in large part to ABC, plastic

bags used to transport alcohol were exempted.

## Local Government

VWA continues to become more engaged in legislation related to local government taxes and powers. This included an equalization of counties' abilities to levy the same taxes as cities. It is likely that efforts to expand this authority can be expected going forward. We also monitored a variety of land-use-related issues to protect the right to farm.

## Issues for 2021

In addition to legislation that was either passed or defeated, several important measures were carried over to 2021. These included agriculture issues such as proposals regarding heat exposure by agriculture workers, regulation of contractor application of fertilizers, increased regulation of above-ground storage tanks, and continuing efforts to increase state and local regulation of certain pesticides and herbicides.

The budget also mandated that the administration study how to implement paid family and medical leave. This could significantly increase personnel costs. VWA will be monitoring and advocating on this issue.

2020 was a time of significant change in state government. The tone and level of activity were intense. VWA continues to advocate on behalf of the industry.