

# GRAPE PRESS

Winter 2021

The Quarterly Newsletter of the VIRGINIA VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 37 No. 4

## 2021 HARVEST WRAPS UP



Courtesy of Jake Busching

Our Regional Reports take a look at this year's harvest, starting on Page 3. Above, Paul Hoover, land manager at Hark Vineyards in Earlysville, helps to bring in the Vidal Blanc.

President's Corner

## VVA Preps For Busy and Fruitful Year

By Skip Causey  
*Potomac Point Vineyard & Winery*

Happy post-harvest 2021! I have heard good things about the overall quality of this 2021 harvest with the expectations of some great wines. There have been discussions about some isolated issues, and it seems that most folks saw yields 10 to 15 percent lower than expected. However, they were happy about the crop that did come in.

---

**Registration is now open for the VVA 2022 Winter Technical Meeting on Feb. 17-18!**

---

Downy mildew and wildlife damage appear to have been the biggest culprits this year, but for more information, stay tuned for our regional updates and panel discussions of the harvest at our

*See PRESIDENT on page 2*

## INSIDE

### Tony Wolf Retiring

Va. Tech's highly regarded viticulturist prepares to step down in early 2022.

**PAGE 7**

### Grower's Datebook

Why you should consider joining the VVA Board, and a continuing series of webinars of interest to growers. All this and more!

**PAGE 8**

## Coping with Weather Extremes

*How One Grower Navigated the Challenges of the 2021 Season*

By Jim Law  
*Linden Vineyards*

Vintage 2021 may have been our first climate change test. Every weather event we witnessed was what meteorologists predicted a decade ago. Extremes and fluctuations demanded patience, meteorological fluency, and vineyard intimacy.

Rain defines our vintages. Its impact on vines, grapes and wines is complex. This vintage supported

past observations that factors beyond precipitation amounts, such as soils and slopes, temperature, post-rain weather and vine age, all contribute significantly to grape health and ripening. Water influences three separate but inter-related aspects of winegrowing.

### SOILS

Everything from vegetative growth to juice

*See RAIN on page 6*



VIRGINIA VINEYARDS  
ASSOCIATION

VVA BOARD  
2021

*President*

**Skip Causey**

[skip@potomacpointwinery.com](mailto:skip@potomacpointwinery.com)

*Past President*

**Nate Walsh**

[nate@walshfamilywine.com](mailto:nate@walshfamilywine.com)

*Vice President*

**Todd Henkle**

[todd@lostcreekwinery.com](mailto:todd@lostcreekwinery.com)

*Treasurer*

**AJ Greely**

[aj@harkvineyards.com](mailto:aj@harkvineyards.com)

*Secretary*

**Emily Belcher**

[emily@coyotehole.com](mailto:emily@coyotehole.com)

*At-Large Board Members*

**Jeanette Smith**

[jeanette@vinesmith.com](mailto:jeanette@vinesmith.com)

**Maya Hood White**

[maya@earlymountain.com](mailto:maya@earlymountain.com)

*Advisor*

**Dr. Tony K. Wolf**

[vitis@vt.edu](mailto:vitis@vt.edu)

*Business Manager*

**Tracy Kirkman**

[info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org](mailto:info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org)

*Grape Press/Website Editors*

**Bob Garsson & Chris Garsson**

[editor@virginiavineyardsassociation.org](mailto:editor@virginiavineyardsassociation.org)

**Special thanks for this issue to:**

Rachel Lagergren, Jim Law,  
Grayson Poats, Dean Triplett

**VVA Mailing Address**

**P.O. Box 168**

**Waterford, Va. 20197**

[info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org](mailto:info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER (cont.)

*PRESIDENT, from page 1*

upcoming Winter Technical meeting.

This year's meeting, which will be held Feb. 17-18, 2022, will be a hybrid meeting, both in person at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville and streaming virtually for those who cannot make it or who are not comfortable with large groups yet.

As I write this, I am watching the Omicron variant and hoping it will not affect our meeting or the year as a whole.

This is a recertification year for pesticide applicators licenses, and we have the first day devoted to achieving that. We will also be discussing updates to the spotted lanternfly and its progression, downy mildew, and ripe rot. Grape pathologist Mizuho Nita will provide his annual update.

We will also have regional updates, a vineyard/wine panel discussion, and a comparative wine tasting.

### **Tony Wolf Retiring**

I am not the first to announce this, but Tony Wolf, director and professor of viticulture at Virginia Tech, will not be at our Winter Technical Meeting since he is retiring at the end of January. Tony has been with Virginia Tech for 36 years and he will be sorely missed by the whole Virginia vineyard and wine industry.

These are big shoes to fill, but Virginia Tech is reviewing the position now and starting the process of finding a successor. From what we hear, this will not be a quick process. Even if they identify a candidate soon, it could take months for that person to wrap up work elsewhere and begin at Virginia Tech.

We are expecting this gap to last for up to a year or more. As for this year's Winter Technical Meeting, we have Tremain Hatch, Mizuho Nita, Beth Chang, Doug Pfeiffer and several panel members working with the VVA to make this meeting a success.

We all have stories about when we met Tony Wolf and I can imagine many of them will be discussed over dinner and wine the first night of our Winter Technical.

My wife, Cindi, and I took a vineyard 101 class back in 1995 taught by a young professor from Va. Tech (Tony Wolf) and one from Penn State named Mark Chien. The class went well and several of my newbie classmates now own successful vineyards and wineries.

Ten years after that class, we opened our

own vineyard. The questions I asked back then now seem quite simple and basic, but the answers from Tony were always open and energetic as well as easy to understand.

I laugh now at the cost analysis that we were given and the forecast of how long it would take to get a payback on a vineyard. I thought they were trying to talk us out of starting a vineyard altogether, but most of the numbers panned out in the end. This line of work is not for the faint of heart! I look forward to swapping more Tony stories with everyone in February.

### **Commercial Grape Report**

Finally, I want to thank all the vineyard owners who filled out the first survey for the 2021 Virginia Commercial Grape Report. We have had a great response, which is higher than any survey in the past five years. This first survey had an average fill time of just under 2 minutes!

The second survey, the Crush Report, went out recently. Thank you to all the wineries who have filled it out already; I am sorry that it is taking a little more time to fill out. We have been contacted by several winery owners and winemakers with questions or suggestions for next year. Please, keep these coming. This is your report, and we want to improve it as we go.

Having the tonnage calculated by the end user in addition to the source is helping produce a better picture for our industry. Most of the confusion has been centered around some custom crush facilities (who fills out the survey) or the owners with multiple entities.

We hope to finish compiling the survey results and have the Virginia Commercial Grape Report released to all those who responded to the survey by our Winter Technical Meeting and to the general population by July 2022.

With the report now consisting of two surveys, we will be sending out the 2022 vineyard survey in mid-summer so it isn't right on top of the Crush Report.

In closing, I want to say thank you to Tony Wolf for all that he has done for the wine industry in his 36 years. His guidance, leadership, and research have helped propel us into the powerhouse industry we are today. Having seen and helped our growth from 1985 till now, Tony should be proud of how far we have come.

Tony, I raise a glass of our finest wine in your honor. Cheers!

The Virginia Vineyards Association (VVA) provides Grape Press for general information purposes only. The views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect any official position or policy of the VVA and are not a VVA endorsement of products, practices or services. Before adopting any practices discussed here or purchasing any product or service, users should exercise due diligence and seek professional advice when appropriate.

► **NORTHERN VA.:** “One issue I had was a lower-than-expected yield ...”

By Dean Triplett  
Greenstone Vineyard

Vintage 2021 is over for all the growers in my region. Winemakers, however, are still up to their eyeballs in work. That’s just one of the things I love about being an independent grower. I love the seasonality of our calling plus the ability to kick back a bit after the last cluster is picked.

2021 was an interesting year here for me. Weather, before and during harvest, was both problematic and pretty decent. It just depended on the month you were in. August, as I reported in the last issue of Grape Press, was wet, hot, and humid.

September came in rough, with Tropical Storm Ida dropping nearly 3 inches of rain in a day. After that first week, things calmed down for the most part without any major

rains until the 22nd. Humidity bumped up following the two heavy rain events but was fairly comfortable the rest of the time.

October was pretty calm, with low humidity and just one major event on the 25th which brought heavy rain and close to gale force winds.

In 2021, I put down more sprays in one season than I ever have — 21 sprays during the season. Most, but not all, were entire vineyard sprays. Several, especially towards the end of the season, were targeted sprays on specific varieties.

Years ago, I took pride in the limited number of sprays I put on. My average for many years was about 12 sprays. In some years I could get by with this kind of program. Sometimes I got bit in the rear, usually by downy mildew, ripe/sour rot or black rot. I typically stopped spraying mid-to late August.

Unfortunately, I’ve learned the hard way that I need to keep my sprayer on the tractor, ready to apply fungicides when needed. I’ve seen way too many grape clusters turn to mush almost overnight through lax spraying practices.

Fortunately, most of the late-season spray materials are what I consider fairly mild. I rely heavily on hydrogen peroxide, (which will burn the heck out of you if you’re not very careful), and phosphorous acid. Other, what I term “organic”, materials, Armicarb being just one, are also thrown into the mix.

This year the program seems to have paid off. I had very little disease in most of the harvested fruit.

Petit Verdot was the one variety that I wish I had put on an approved insecticide for fruit flies three weeks before harvest.

See *NORTHERN* on page 4

**SEASON AFTER SEASON,  
NORTH AMERICA'S LEADING GRAPEVINE NURSERY**

Quality grapevines don't grow overnight. In fact, the knowledge and skills behind the process take years to cultivate. That's why smart growers place real value in the experience and leadership of Wonderful Nurseries. Year after year, season after season, we have been innovators in growing technology and in delivering the industry's most tested vines.

We believe in the philosophy of “Growers First”, and that has enabled us to remain first choice for many of the nation's most respected growers. As North America's largest grapevine nursery, we are proud to be recognized as a driving force of loyalty and stability for our grower partners.

[WonderfulNurseries.com](http://WonderfulNurseries.com) 661.758.4777

27920 McCombs Road, Wasco, California 93280  

© 2021 Wonderful Nurseries LLC. All rights reserved. WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL NURSERIES and the accompanying logos are trademarks of Wonderful Nurseries LLC or its affiliates.

**WONDERFUL NURSERIES, SETTING THE STANDARD FOR OVER 30 YEARS**



**SERVING YOUR VINE, ALMOND AND PISTACHIO TREE NEEDS**

**Wonderful nurseries™**

## ► NORTHERN VA. (cont.)

*NORTHERN, from page 3*

Since it's the last variety to be harvested, yellow jackets and other insects can be a real problem, even though I kept up a pretty tight spray program.

I've always assumed that's at least in part because there's no other fruit in the vineyard. Strangely though, birds and four legged critters weren't a real problem this year, just insects — proving once again that it's always something!

Harvest in all of my varieties, with the exception of Petit Verdot, was four days earlier than last year. The PV was a week later. This slightly early harvest in most varieties seems to have been pretty common throughout our region.

The first harvest for me was on Aug. 25 with my Muscat Ottonel. The last was Oct. 8 with my Petit Verdot. Quality of fruit as far as I've observed here and from what I've heard from others around the region has been good, especially if you kept up with your August spray program.

One issue I had was a lower-than-expected yield throughout my vineyard in all my varieties. I'd estimate a 20 percent drop in yields from what I consider normal.

Tremain Hatch told me that a number of other growers in Loudoun County were seeing the same thing. But it was certainly not universal. Hybrid varieties seemed

to fare very well with nice-sized crops. Chambourcin and Chardonnay in particular had excellent yields.

I had a chance to talk to Ashton Lough, winemaker for Three Creeks Winery and consultant for several others. He told me that most of the vineyards he dealt with in Fauquier County had good yields. So, what happened here has me scratching my head a bit.

We know that this year's crop was formed in last year's buds. Did something occur weather-wise last year that affected this year's crop? Did the damage inflicted by this year's cicada brood reduce yields? Or was it just seasonal variability? I have no clue. I don't usually see this problem in all varieties in the same year.

November has been pretty mild throughout the region. I finally had a hard frost event on the 21st that put everything to rest. In my vineyard and other vineyards that I've seen in the area, new vines, second-year vines and replacements seem to have fared well and are going into winter in good shape.

As I mentioned in my last report, we had excellent growth this past summer with the young vines due to all the rain we got. I'm hopeful that I'll be able to crop them lightly in year three if all continues well.

I learned a long time ago that a positive attitude is important in any thing we do in life, especially with farming. It won't keep

**“Quality of fruit as far as I’ve observed here and from what I’ve heard from others around the region has been good ...”**

the deer, raccoons, and bugs at bay, but at least it helps you hang onto friends. So I'm positively looking forward to a mild winter and timely, frost-free bud break next season.

It could happen.

*Editor's Note: Dean Triplett is a regional reporter for Grape Press, covering Northern Virginia. We hope to feature more news about Northern Virginia's vineyards and wineries in future columns. Please contact Dean at [gsvineyard13@gmail.com](mailto:gsvineyard13@gmail.com) if you'd like to provide information for upcoming columns about growing conditions, new plantings or anything else you think would be of interest to other growers.*

## ► SOUTHERN VA.: “... Dry conditions continued from late summer with very little rainfall ...”

**By Rachel Lagergren**  
*Southern Regional reporter*

**A**s I write this column at the end of November, most days begin with frost on the ground and remain cool with intensely blue skies. The dry conditions continued from late summer with very little rainfall to end the year. In fact, with the 33 inches we've received this year, only 8 inches has fallen since the end of August. Most of southern and eastern Virginia is now designated as abnormally dry.

“Another crazy year,” said Kevin Sutherland of Nicewonder Farm & Vineyards in Bristol. “We started the season after a second budbreak throughout the vineyard due to a hard freeze at the end of April and finished it with a dry and hot harvest.

“Our Chardonnay and Viognier produced poorly; however, the Merlot and Petit Verdot were both very fruitful,” he added. “Our first-year Cabernet Franc did very well despite pest pressure from leaf hoppers and spider mites.”

Kevin also took note of the change in activities that came with the arrival of winter weather.

“With the arrival of the first frost on November 14th comes time to start our winter projects; soil sampling, removing dead plants, repairing erosion areas, replacing broken posts, etc.,” he said.

Virginia Hamlet of Hamlet Vineyards in Bassett is taking a wait-until-next-year approach. “I wish I had more to report,” she said. “But it was a bit of a disappointing year at Hamlet Vineyards. In a season where the rest of the state enjoyed an abundance

of high-quality fruit, we were down more than 50 percent. I know other vineyards in the southern region suffered a similar fate. I think I'll wait to report better news in the spring.”

I agree. Hopefully we will have better luck in 2022. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

*Editor's Note: Rachel Lagergren is a regional reporter for Grape Press, covering Southern Virginia. We hope to feature more news about Southern Virginia's vineyards and wineries in future columns. Please contact Rachel at [lager0862@gmail.com](mailto:lager0862@gmail.com) if you'd like to provide information for upcoming columns about growing conditions, new plantings or anything else you think would be of interest to other growers.*

▶ **CENTRAL VA.:** “... There is real potential for wines of high quality to be made ...”

By Grayson Poats  
Valley Road Vineyards

The 2021 growing season here in Central Virginia continued the run dating back to 2015 of odd-numbered years producing above average to excellent vintages with the even-numbered years being less than stellar.

As we all know, Virginia does not enjoy the kind of cookie-cutter weather of some regions, where one year differs very little from others. The quality of our wines has always been very vintage driven.

At the right site, in the right year with the guidance of a knowledgeable grower and a skilled winemaker, we can compete on the world stage. But given the conditions of, say 2018, it becomes a challenge to produce

a high-quality wine.

This past season ranked among the better years, not top of the heap, but certainly capable of producing wines we are proud of.

These impressions of mine were echoed in conversations with other growers in the region. Tim Gorman of Cardinal Point Vineyard & Winery gave the year an overall grade of A-/B+. He felt that conditions, while on the hot side, especially in a July, were near picture perfect but that results didn't quite live up to his expectations.

Brix numbers in the three Nelson and Albemarle County locations where he grows or sources fruit were generally about two degrees lower than what he had expected. On the positive side, pH and TA chemistry were very good, and disease pressure was low. He suspects that the vines may have

shut down during the hot spells, thereby hampering sugar accumulation.

But the wine has the final word and here Tim is quite pleased; his wines have good color and fantastic flavors, which sounds pretty good to me.

John Saunders at Silver Creek Orchards told a similar tale. He felt that his whites came in very nice, and, like Tim, he had clean fruit with no disease issues.

However, his reds didn't ripen as fully as hoped for after the rains of mid-August and September.

As he has been picking apples through the middle of November, he hadn't had the chance to speak with the wineries he sells to. However, he thinks they will be pleased with the resulting wines.

And as a buyer of some of those grapes, I can assure him that we are very pleased with all the fruit we purchased from him this year. Overall, he gave the year a B+.

My experience in 2021 was a bit more similar to John's than that of Tim. Generally, I didn't have trouble with sugar accumulation in my reds. The Cab Franc reached 23.5 Brix at harvest and my Petit Verdot was coming in at 23.7 at our Afton location. The Chambourcin at our Lovingston vineyard measured 22.7 Brix, the highest it has ever been.

But, like John, I did experience setbacks in a couple of varieties of reds with ill-timed late-season rains. Both my Merlot and Petit Verdot in Lovingston lost over 1.5 degrees of sugar after heavy rains on Sept. 21 and had to be picked at that point.

The positives we saw were much the same as Tim and John reported: pH and TA numbers well within a workable range, good seed maturity and very nice flavors present in the juice.

All of this leads me to believe that there is real potential for wines of high quality to be made from the 2021 vintage. My grade for the season would be an A-.

My hope for 2022 is that we break the trend of one good year followed by one poor year that has plagued us over the past several seasons. That may happen or it may not; in Virginia viticulture we have to be ready for anything.

Meanwhile, Happy Holidays to everyone!

*Editor's Note: Grayson Poats is a regional reporter for Grape Press, covering Central Virginia. We hope to feature more news about Central Virginia's vineyards and wineries in future columns.*

**WINCHESTER**  
EQUIPMENT COMPANY  
*Since 1957*



121 INDIAN HOLLOW ROAD  
WINCHESTER, VA 22603

1-800-323-3581 | WWW.WINCHESTEREQUIPMENT.COM

# Coping With Weather Extremes

*RAIN, from page 1*

concentration is regulated by a soil's Plant Available Water (PAW) and resulting vine hydric stress. There are four stages where soil moisture plays a role in wine quality.

**1. Post bloom period.** During berry enlargement PAW influences berry size. Some hydric stress makes for smaller berry size which reduces rot potential and increases flavors.

**2. Veraison.** Hydric stress in mid-summer results in quick and uniform color change and ripening which is especially important for high quality red wines.

**3. Post veraison.** Low PAW prevents stimulation of competitive shoot growth which allows the vine to focus solely on ripening grapes.

**4. Ripening.** High PAW (wet soils) at ripening will result in:

- ▶ Juice dilution;
- ▶ Berry swelling, rot potential, and compromised, weakened skins;
- ▶ Berry cracking.

## WEATHER DURING RIPENING

### Temperature

The temperature during and after rain has a bearing on rot development. Warm, wet conditions trigger sour rot which has a highly detrimental quality impact on resulting wines. Rainfall when temperatures are over 70 degrees F (21 C) can result in fast-developing sour rot. Rainfall in the 60-to-70 degree F (15 to 21 C) range slows the development of sour rot. Under 60 degrees F (15 C), sour rot is rarely a problem, but botrytis and ripe rots can still slowly develop.

### Drying

Weather conditions post rain are perhaps the most important aspect of the vine's ability to recover from rain. Low dew points (humidity), wind and sun all greatly reduce rot development and assist in berry water loss.

## VINES

### Vine age

Old vines are more resilient to rain at harvest than young vines. Their more established and deeper root systems moderate water uptake. At around eight years old I've noticed that vines handle extremes better, then at around twenty years their ability to handle rains is significantly superior to younger vines.

### Cluster architecture and skin thickness

Petit Manseng has thick skins and loose

clusters. It is resistant to rot. Riesling has thin skins and tight clusters. It has rot in most years. But there is a middle ground that depends not just on variety, but also clone, soil fertility (nitrogen), and PAW during berry development post bloom.

### When to Pick: Hold Them or Fold Them?

Picking decisions in 2021 were stressful and difficult. The harvest was defined by cycles of rain followed by the promise of fine weather.

In August 2021, the first rain events were welcome as some vineyard blocks were going into extreme hydric stress. We experienced a

**“Intuition and experience will play an ever-greater role in making great wines as climate change takes charge.”**

couple of rains of around 0.5 to 0.7 inches (12 to 18 mm). These rains refreshed the vines and were welcome.

Then came a cycle of much heavier 1.5 to 2.5 inches (38 to 60mm), but short duration rains that eventually saturated the soils. This stimulated shoot tip growth. Grape ripening and new vegetative growth were in competition.

Fortunately, this occurred after a fast and uniform veraison which contributed to the success of red wines. In fact, the July/early-August drought probably saved the vintage as the resulting small berries and loose clusters were more resistant to rot and uniform veraison gave a boost to red wine quality.

Soils remained moist through harvest. But additional rains did not have their usual significant impact as far as berry swelling and dilution. The vines seemed to have acclimated to having continual access to water. Nevertheless, ripening slowed, and flavors were uninspiring.

Harvest started late (Sept. 10) as we waited for flavors and skin phenols to develop

and acids to calm. Berry sampling and lab analysis were eventually abandoned as it became apparent that cluster integrity and flavor development would trigger picking.

I spent a good part of most days walking the vines and tasting grapes.

### Know Your Rots

I spent most of harvest tasting compromised berries in the vineyard. I needed to understand what kind of rot was developing and how it would impact wine quality. Grape integrity determined when to pick.

Fortunately, sour rot was a factor in only certain sections of high vigor Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc vines. Sour rot is a nightmare and can ruin wine potential even in small amounts.

As September temperatures cooled, we saw very little sour rot, but ripe rot became more of a player. I can live with low to even moderate levels of ripe rot (and botrytis) in white grapes. In fact, I do believe that the 2021 white wines benefited from a degree of concentration coming from infected berries.

By late September our red grapes were just starting to turn a corner. Clusters from young vines were becoming fragile to the point where they would start to fall apart with more rain. While they were not ripe enough to make noteworthy red wines, they were in a good window for rosé. Old vine fruit held up well.

The test came after a big rain on Sept. 22. There was some berry cracking and some ripe rot, but we held off picking as weather conditions turned perfect with cool temperatures, low dew points, wind and sun.

The compromised berries dried up. Rot stopped in its tracks. Ripening proceeded. The berries lost water and gained some intensity. The red vintage was salvaged. We held off picking as long as possible in order to take advantage of every hour of sunshine. Wine style was shaped by rain: elegant and feminine.

As winemakers, we respected the vintage by employing gentle extractions and very little new oak.

Rain during harvest is rarely celebrated. But this is a reality of our climate. Intuition and experience will play an ever-greater role in making great wines as climate change takes charge. Vintage variation will become more pronounced, and winegrowers will need to be flexible and willing to change course mid-stream.

We are extremely pleased with the quality and style of the 2021 vintage. But getting there wasn't easy.

# Tony Wolf Stepping Down

*Va. Tech Viticulturist Discusses What Industry Might Expect in 2022*

Grape Press

For 36 years, Virginia Tech viticulturist Tony K. Wolf has played a central role in the growth and development of the Virginia wine industry, serving as professor of viticulture at Virginia Tech, director of the Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center and technical advisor to the Virginia Vineyards Association.

Among his many accomplishments, Tony “conducted research to expand the grape varietal landscape in Virginia, to better understand the adaptation of grapes to Virginia’s colorful biotic and abiotic challenges and, through collaboration with enologists, to improve grape and wine quality potential,” according to the American Society of Enology and Viticulture Eastern Section, which honored him with its 2017 Outstanding Achievement Award.

However, it seems all good things come to an end, and Tony announced last month that he plans to retire in early 2022. “It is time for a fresh start — both for the viticulture position, and for my own pursuits,” he said in the November online issue of his **Viticulture Notes**.

In his article, Tony addressed a number of the questions on the minds of many in the industry regarding his departure. Here’s what he had to say:

First, I have repeatedly been told by our college administration that the viticulture position at Winchester will be refilled as a viticulture position. I’m not entirely certain what the position will look like.

If it remains a tenure-track position, the college would seek approval to refill at the assistant professor rank and a national/international search would commence as early as 2022. In any event, the position would have a dual mission of extension and research, similar to my own.

I voluntarily added teaching an on-line, undergraduate viticulture course to my own responsibilities in 2013, which could possibly be continued with a new hire. In the short term, my research and extension associate, Tremain Hatch, will remain in his position through the end of March 2022. Tremain is in a grant-funded or what we call “soft-funded” position which expires at the end of March.

My research associate, Dana Acimovic, will continue as the viticulture Principal Investigator on our multi-state USDA/NIFA project, at least for two years, and will likely seek Wine Board funding to conduct (or maintain) one or more other research projects here at the AREC, either independently, or collaboratively with others.

The other team members at the AREC, Dr. Beth Chang (extension enologist) and

**“... It’s truly been my privilege to serve Virginia’s wine and grape industry in my role as Virginia Tech’s viticulturist.”**

Dr. Mizuho Nita (grape pathologist) will also still be here and will continue their respective research and extension programs in support of the wine industry.

The other hat that I’ve worn since 2004 is Director of the Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center (a mouthful, which is why we just say the “AREC”). The administrative role can consume as much as 50 percent of my effective time, sometimes more during periods of personnel turn-over.

I’m pleased to say that the college administration has opted to recruit a new director to the AREC as part of the recruitment of a new entomologist. Dr. Chris Bergh, our current entomologist, will also be retiring in early 2022.

What this potentially means for the wine/



Tony K. Wolf

grape industry is a “full-time” viticulturist again, when the position is refilled, and not the “part-time” position that I’ve been doing for the past 17 years.

I recently re-read my first “Viticulture Notes” newsletter (January 1986) in which I introduced myself and dove into an article on vineyard site effects on spring frost. Some things haven’t changed; damaging spring frosts can still occur. The educational component of the job has certainly changed and will continue to do so. I’m very much “last century” in my thinking that it’s always good to explain concepts and practices in some detail as part of the educational enterprise, and Viticulture Notes was a good medium for such discussions.

But newsletters and bulletins, even wine grape production guides, are less commonly used by those seeking instant information today, and this is something that will likely change with my successor’s approach to the job.

There will be many things about the job that I will miss, and some that I won’t, but it’s truly been my privilege to serve Virginia’s wine and grape industry in my role as Virginia Tech’s viticulturist.

While each season has its challenges, each brings new opportunities. I am very optimistic about the future of our wine and grape industry, and I wish each of you the very best in the seasons ahead.



# GROWER'S DATEBOOK

*Highlighting events that may be of interest to members of the Virginia wine industry. For more info as well as registration details, click on each event. For more happenings, check out the VVA website.*

## Have You Ever Thought About Serving on the VVA Board?

By VVA President Skip Causey

There are many reasons to consider board service, but I'm going to focus on just two. First, you can have a voice in shaping the policies and programs that affect our industry and that help keep it strong and growing. And second, it's a great way to meet and exchange ideas with experienced Virginia growers and other industry experts.

The time commitment averages about 3-5 hours a month for an at-large member and a little more for officers. We meet eight to ten times a year, with a break at harvest time, and about half of those meetings are virtual. The others are conducted in-person in central Virginia.

We will be filling the positions of vice president, secretary, and one at-large seat for 2022-23. If you'd like to learn more or if you know of anyone who may be a good candidate, please email the VVA at [info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org](mailto:info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org). The nomination deadline is Jan. 7.

## REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE 2022 VVA WINTER TECHNICAL MEETING!

The VVA is scheduled to hold its 2022 Winter Technical Meeting Feb. 17-18 both in-person at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville and as a virtual event.

You can look forward to:

- ▶ A review of the 2021 season with discussions on fighting outbreaks of spotted lanternfly, downy mildew and ripe rot;
  - ▶ Talks and tastings of varieties new to Virginia, with a focus on Tannat and white vinifera;
  - ▶ Info on a new grape breeding program coming to Virginia;
  - ▶ Pesticide recertification;
  - ▶ A popular, pre-meeting virtual session on integrated disease management on Feb. 16.
- Click for more details and to register for either in-person or online attendance.



**And here's a VVA link for early Omni reservations.**

▶ **The Eastern Viticulture and Enology Forum** is continuing its virtual presentations with a 2021-2022 Winter Webinar Series. The next session will be "Demystifying Crop Load Effects in Pinot Noir through Academic and Industry Collaboration" from 3 to 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 11. Upcoming topics include: "Introducing a

Sustainability Workbook for Winery Operations" on Jan. 25 and "Lesser Planted Wine Grape Cultivars in a Humid Growing Region - A Roundtable Discussion" on Feb. 8. The webinar series is presented by Cornell AgriTech, Virginia Tech Extension, and Penn State Extension. Registration is required for each session. See the

full schedule and recordings of past webinars on the Forum website.

▶ **Piedmont Virginia Community College Workforce Services** in Charlottesville has scheduled several classes in viticulture and enology this winter and spring, including dormant pruning and canopy management.

*Information listed here is current at the time of publication, but for all events, be sure to check directly with each organizer for the latest on any changes and/or cancellations. Do you know of an event that would be of interest to Virginia wine grape growers? Contact [cgarsson@gmail.com](mailto:cgarsson@gmail.com).*