

GRAPE PRESS

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the VIRGINIA VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 39 No. 1

Tom Kelly Named Grower of the Year

By Bob Garsson
Virginia Vineyards Association

Tom Kelly, a longtime vineyard manager and consultant, as well as a former president of the Virginia Vineyards Association (VVA), was named VVA's Grower of the Year at our 2023 Technical Meeting in Charlottesville on Feb. 17.

"Congratulations to Tom Kelly on being named the VVA Grower of the Year," Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr said in a statement to the VVA. "Since beginning his career in 1989, he has grown as a viticulturist, provided insight to counterparts, led the VVA, and volunteered his expertise when needed."

Secretary Lohr added: "This type of

leadership and commitment has helped Virginia's wine industry grow and thrive in the tenth-ranked wine producing state in the nation. The industry is a tremendous economic driver for the Commonwealth as it provides a \$1.73 billion boost to the state's economy and creates more than 10,000 jobs."

See AWARD on page 8



THE VVA: GROWING STRONG FOR 40 YEARS

*Since incorporating in 1983, the Virginia Vineyards Association has been a vital resource for the Commonwealth's wine grape growers and an advocate for the industry. To celebrate our 40th anniversary, a new series in Grape Press looks at the VVA's history and how far we've come. VVA President Skip Causey launches the series with a behind-the-scenes look at the VVA today. **Pages 6-7***



The VVA and growers at work: From left, harvesting Cabernet Franc for Walsh Family Wine in Loudoun County (photo by Ben Sedlins); a VVA-sponsored equipment demonstration hosted by Barboursville Vineyards (photo by Grape Press); and harvest day for Chardonnay at Nicewonder Farm & Vineyards in Bristol (photo by Kevin Sutherland).

How Warm Was It? | **Pages 2-5**

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pponton51@gmail.com

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Grape Press/Website Editors

Bob Garsson & Chris Garsson

editor@virginiavineyardsassociation.org

Special thanks for this issue to:

Mizuho Nita, Gonzalo Ortiz,
Kevin Sutherland, Dean Triplett

VVA Mailing Address

P.O. Box 168

Waterford, Va. 20197

info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org

REGIONAL REPORTS

► EASTERN VIRGINIA

“Our farm’s 2022 planting showed some, but thankfully not uniform, water stress toward the end of the year.”

By Gonzalo Ortiz

Rustic Vintage

Here in the beautiful Northern Neck, we did not have our first night under 32 degrees Fahrenheit until Nov. 16. This gave our clean and functioning first-year vines ample time to go into dormancy. The coldest stretch we have had, up until now, here in our area has been the period from Dec. 24-27, where we had daily low temperatures ranging from 10 degrees Fahrenheit to 19 degrees Fahrenheit.

On the other end of the conversation, the first half of January had a handful of days with temperatures over 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Our farm’s 2022 planting showed some, but thankfully not uniform, water stress toward the end of the year. The vines are not being irrigated, and we did not have sufficient rain in August and September.

Because of this and with the temperature swings of late December and early January, I delayed pruning until the second half of January. I did this so that any injury would show itself before we started to cut back. I saw that some of the established vineyards in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula began their pruning the second week of January.

From the first frost event in mid-November until the beginning of pruning in mid-January, I walked the vineyard and made some cuts to the first-year vines to see how they were faring. While the color shown in the cuts is not exactly what I would like, we still are in the game.

The vines from last year’s Chardonnay and Petit Verdot planting grew uniformly both in diameter and in length without a trellis system in place to an average of five to six feet of length. On our farm we do not have deer fencing. Because of sufficient uniformity and

the threat of animal pressure in the upcoming spring, I thought it appropriate to begin establishing our young trunks versus cutting back to two or three buds.

As a result of our use of grow tubes last year, about two-thirds of the plantings have only one dominant cane with the other third having two potential trunks. I decided to begin leaving one two-foot trunk per vine and when available have been leaving a one bud extra spur to hedge the investment. While this decision gives me some options if there is noticeable damage, it will also add substantially more suckers to remove in the spring if there is no real damage.

Because of the potential for animal pressure, I also expect to be suckering latter than I normally would in order to confirm I will have my three or four shoots available for year two. I hope to complete pruning by mid-March while tying the trunks to pencil rods on less-than-optimal pruning days. We aim to get the trellis up in April.

This winter has given me a memorable opportunity that I am grateful for: when my father, who is turning 70, visits me, we prune together as we began to do almost thirty years ago.

Looking forward to this growing year, I hope that agricultural loan interest rates slow their rapid rate of increase, that supplies and equipment are available when needed, and that shipping costs temper.

Editor’s Note: Gonzalo Ortiz is a regional reporter for Grape Press, covering Eastern Virginia. Please contact Gonzalo at eastvagrowers@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.

Become a Regional Reporter for Grape Press

Grape Press has an opening for a volunteer to write our regular Central Virginia Regional Report, which focuses on events, conditions, and other observations of interest to growers. If you’re interested or have questions, please contact Bob Garsson: rgarsson@gmail.com.

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▶ NORTHERN VIRGINIA

“In an attempt to cut way down on predation in [Muscat Ottonel] I am planning on installing my electric netting around the vineyard earlier in the season.”

By Dean Triplett
Greenstone Vineyard

I think that one word sums up most of the winter of 2022-23 so far: MILD.

Actually, very mild! Aside from an arctic blast back at Christmas, we have experienced much milder than average temperatures this season. The Christmas freeze did get cold by our standards. I got down to 3 degrees above zero here at my place on Christmas Eve.

And the cold temperatures lasted until the 27th. Other than that event, December was mild and January has been decidedly mild. So mild, that as I write this at the end of the month, January 2023 will go down as the

third warmest start to a year on record.

Fortunately, as far as I can see, the vineyards in our region have mostly gone into this winter in very good shape.

Tremain Hatch, viticulture research and extension associate at Virginia Tech, also took note of the Christmas freeze. “We had a significant cold snap in late December,” he said. “I am not aware of any temperatures below about 2 degrees Fahrenheit in Northern Virginia. I suspect the vines made it through that event with no trouble; they should have been deep in dormancy at that point.

“Looking forward,” he added, “I hope we maintain nice cool temperatures as we approach spring. Unfortunately, I do think

we will be seeing more spotted lanternfly in our vineyards in the next season. I am taking time this winter to identify Tree of Heaven adjacent and in close proximity to my vineyard. If you open a search engine and enter ‘**Invasive Tree-of-Heaven & native look-alike identification photographs, Virginia Cooperative Extension,**’ you’ll find a helpful publication. Knowing where these trees are located may help if control measures are needed in the coming years.”

Ben Sedlins, vineyard manager for Walsh Family Wine, said in a text message to me that the lowest temperature he observed was around 4 degrees Fahrenheit. Besides the

See NORTHERN on page 4

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► NORTHERN VIRGINIA (cont.)

NORTHERN, from page 3

single cold snap, and a few highs in the 70s, this winter has gone by apace. He said they are wrapping up rough pruning and doing some usual odd jobs around the vineyards before the final prune.

Rainfall Varied

Again, both of these observations fit well with what I've experienced here this winter. Besides the warmer than normal temperatures, rainfall has been up and down depending on the month. In December, rainfall at my vineyard here on the Catoctin Ridge was about 4.7 inches. January, on the other hand, saw only about 1.8 inches of rain for those same locations.

The long-range forecast, for what it's worth, called for a cooler-than-average February, with lower-than-average precipitation totals. The March forecast is for warmer temperatures and average precipitation.

Pruning for us is still a month or so away. We always hold off as long as possible, just in case. The normal off-season workload in the vineyards is pretty much down to checking on equipment and doing an inventory of chemicals left over from last year.

Electric Fencing Decisions

One off-season decision that I've made for my site is to keep my Muscat Ottonel vines in the ground for at least one more year. In an attempt to cut way down on predation in this variety I am planning on installing my electric netting around the vineyard earlier in the season.

Normally, I have all the netting in place around my deer fence anywhere from the middle to the end of June. I will now have it installed by the beginning of June at the latest.

I will also be purchasing extra netting to install around the Muscat Ottonel sections of my vineyard. My Muscat is in two different areas of the vineyard. The upper section consists of two long rows. The lower portion is eight shorter rows that reduce in length as they go down the hill to fit the topography of the site.

My thought is to place netting directly around two rows at a time beginning at the first signs of veraison and before any signs of predation. Placing the netting this way will still allow me to spray the Muscat vines by going up and down every other row.

By veraison, the fruit clusters are typically

“The one thing I am starting to look for in netting is small mesh spacing. Some netting designed for raccoons is designed with larger mesh spacing, but I’ve found that it’s possible for really persistent raccoons to push their way right through this type of netting.”

less susceptible to disease, and if the vines are kept clean enough up to this point, I believe I can get by with this strategy. By placing the netting around the vines this way I'm creating an extra barrier for the critters, primarily raccoons, groundhogs and, to a lesser degree, opossums that are doing the majority of damage. This won't be a cheap option but if it works, it doesn't take much harvested fruit to pay for the netting over time.

I've been asked by some growers about my experience with electric netting which I'd like to touch on briefly. There are a number of different companies on the web that sell electric netting. I use a company called Premier 1 for my netting. I'm in no way affiliated with the company and get nothing from them by endorsing their products. I've just found that the products they sell are high quality and last. I learned a long time ago that you get what you pay for in life, especially in a vineyard.

The oldest netting that I've purchased has lasted eight to nine seasons so far. Sometimes they get damaged, but can be repaired fairly easily. The netting comes with repair kits.

The one thing I am starting to look for in netting is small mesh spacing. Some netting designed for raccoons is designed with larger mesh spacing, but I've found that it's possible for really persistent raccoons to push their way right through this type of netting. This is especially true when the ground is hard and dry. Under these conditions you just don't get the "grounding" effect that you need to deliver a strong shock to the big boys.

You should keep in mind that it's important to try and keep as much of the area under this netting as weed free as possible.

It's also smart to bait the netting with little

strips of aluminum foil with peanut butter coated on the underside and hung on a "hot" wire. When the critters smell the peanut butter and come in close to check it out, even on dry ground they'll get a convincing jolt to the nose or mouth.

Deer and bear will also get the idea with this technique.

Features to Consider

Of course, you should use the best charger that you can afford. Premier 1 has recommendations for different types of chargers, both AC and 12 volt.

Another thing to consider is the height of the netting. It varies from 60 inches for deer, down to 18 inches for the raccoon netting.

I've been mainly using the 20-inch Versa net. It has a good mix of tight mesh and decent height for my application. While netting like this hasn't been 100 percent effective, it has helped significantly in cutting down on the damage done by our four-legged friends. And hopefully by using this new strategy I'll be able to keep even more of the fruit.

From veraison to harvest, between the old high tensile wire deer fence, the plastic deer mesh connected to the deer fence, the electric netting around the deer fence and the bird netting over the vines themselves, it sometimes reminds me more of a prison yard than a vineyard!

Here's to a great 2023 season!

***Editor's Note:** Dean Triplett is a regional reporter for Grape Press, covering Northern Virginia. Please contact Dean at 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 VIRGINIA

“Our 2022 Petit Verdot was cropped at six tons per acre or 2.5 pounds per foot of cordon. It was not our intention to crop that heavy, but the wine had great color, aroma, and flavor.”

By Kevin Sutherland
Nicewonder Farm & Vineyards

With a much-needed break at the end of December, we had time to reflect on what we did in the vineyard that we liked (what worked), and what we didn't like (what we won't repeat). Our 2022 Petit Verdot was cropped at six tons per acre or 2.5 pounds per foot of cordon. It was not our intention to crop that heavy, but the wine had great color, aroma, and flavor. We will keep that in mind for 2023.

We have our 2022 reds aging in the barrel, and we are preparing our whites and rosé for bottling. We are happy with how all the wines turned out.

When weather permits, we are in the vineyard pulling out dead plants, getting soil samples, applying amendments as needed, and repairing trellis and erosion areas. Pruning for us starts the end of February.

A Little Too Warm

The winter season so far has been a little too warm for our liking, except for the week around Christmas when temperatures plunged to -2 degrees Fahrenheit. We don't anticipate any damage. We would like to see some colder temperatures for sure.

Just a quick recap on the 2022 growing season. It was the wettest growing season that I have experienced dating back to

2005, with over 36 inches of rain from April through October. Luckily, most of September and all of October were dry.

Around our region, Adam Fariss, owner of Iron Heart Winery, Allisonia, said he experienced an incredible growing season in 2022, with remarkably ripe fruit and higher yields.

“Beyond a lot of luck with weather, we made a number of changes to our canopy management practices that aided in that success,” he said. “We looked to growers with a lifetime of experience to help us move toward industry best practices.”

'Inventory Days On-Hand'

Adam added: “Now, in the winter lulls, we are focusing on finishing trials in the winery cellar and preparing for spring bottling as we make volume decisions and gather material quotes. We like to review our 'inventory days on-hand' to help decide what to bottle, sell in bulk, or take to Salty Stash Distillery (our sister company). 'Inventory days on-hand' is your warehouse inventory divided by your average daily usage; we like to keep our warehouse inventory below one-and-a-half years at its highest (after bottling).

“We won't start pruning activities until April or May due both to labor constraints and a desire to help thwart frost damage. Our vineyard tasks are limited during the dormant winter months as we turn cattle out into the vineyards.

“We buy small steers in the spring, hold them in a paddock through the summer and then over-winter them on the lush vineyard grass to be sold heavier in the spring (another stream of diverse revenue),” Adam said. “The cattle don't harm the vines, they break up some of the soil in the aisles and drop a lot of manure.

“We will apply lime throughout the vineyard as prescribed by soil analysis and fertilizer to our hybrid vine bases. Our hybrid vines seem to have suffered from years of over-cropping and struggled with vigor three years ago. Better canopy and crop management with the addition of fertilizer has led to recovery of canopy strength.

“We have experienced a mild winter up through January, but we are slightly concerned about cold damage from the three-day cold snap around Christmas,” Adam concluded.

Hoping things on your farms are booming and 2023 brings great fruit. Keep farming!

Editor's Note: Kevin Sutherland is secretary of the Virginia Vineyards Association Board and a regional reporter for Grape Press, covering Southern Virginia. Please contact Kevin at ksutherland1@live.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.

INDUSTRY NEWS

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The VVA at 40

Focusing on the needs of growers today and planning for the continuing success of our vineyards and our industry

By Skip Causey
VVA President

[Part I in our 40th Anniversary series]

The number one focus of the Virginia Vineyards Association has been getting as much technical information as we can out to our members. For the past two decades, this has been done primarily through our Winter and Summer Technical meetings.

These meetings require extensive planning. Usually, we start planning next year’s meeting right after the current one ends, typically with feedback from our members. We brainstorm several ideas and discuss member needs and interests. By the second or third planning session, a theme starts to develop that feeds the rest of the program.

Some of these themes tie directly into research being done by Virginia Tech or industry groups. Tapping into this research helps us develop the speakers, presenters, and panelists for the meeting.

We also use these meetings to show off members who have given back to our industry and their community as well as those who have paved the way for newer folks in the industry. Our Grape Grower of the Year and our Tony Wolf Lifetime Achievement Award are very important to us, as well as to state agriculture officials.

At the Winter Technical, we do hold a VVA Board business meeting to show the process and present our budgets. And, of course, everyone looks forward to tasting new styles or types of wines at the meetings and networking with old friends and new acquaintances. The VVA Board also discusses the state of the industry, what is needed or what our members want to know, and we have committees that dive deeper into these issues. Here are a few of those committees:

Communications

How do we get this information out to our members? Our website and the long-running Grape Press newsletter come from this committee. Currently, Bob and Chris Garsson chair the communications committee and work hard to keep us current.

Of course, Tracy Kirkman works behind



From top: Grape Press, Tony Wolf, Grape Press



Winter or summer, indoors or out, learning more about viticulture is a year-round endeavor. From the top: Venues for our Summer Technical meetings and socials tend to feature stunning locales, like this vineyard site at Veritas; a VVA pruning workshop was held at King Family Vineyards and led by an Italian consultant; our Winter Technical brought together Virginia Cooperative Extension agents and growers.



the scenes to keep our programs and systems coordinated and working and manages our email blasts, membership database and payment system.

Research & Education

This committee follows different programs being initiated and reviewed across the Commonwealth. The folks on this committee play an advisory role regarding grant requests submitted to the Wine Board, and the

committee itself is a hub of ideas that keeps us abreast of current research as we plan our technical meetings. In a sense, the whole board now serves on this committee as we work through the details on the winter and summer technical meetings.

Commercial Grape Report

We created this committee in 2021 when the Virginia Vineyards Association asked to

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VVA ANNIVERSARY

VVA, from page 6

take over this survey and report. The decision to outsource the CGR five years earlier seemed to have disconnected it from the industry. When the 2020 report came back with less than 44 percent of our vineyards and wineries responding, it seemed clear that the industry had to either scrap it or take it over.

The 2021 survey had a more robust response rate, with 90 percent of vineyards and more than 80 percent of wineries reporting. The numbers were strong, and we were able to prove that Virginia crossed an important threshold with over 5,000 acres of vines planted.

We also learned that Cabernet Franc was our number one planted variety.

We are now in our second year with the 2022 report expected to be out in March or April of this year, and we have been approved for a third year.

Legislative

The VVA recently merged our Legislative Committee into the same committee for the Virginia Wineries Association (VWA). The new committee is a large one, with over 40 members. Items of concern are shared and talked through in this group, and then discussed with members of the VVA board and state legislators.

We also have two VVA members serving on the seven-member Legislative Board. The Legislative Board is a smaller, nimbler group that can react much more quickly to emerging issues than the full legislative committee. Many times, proposals will come up in a legislative session, and we have only hours to react, not days or months.

Mary Beth Williams, of Williams Compliance and Consulting Group, serves on this committee to provide legal advice to the VVA and VWA, and Anne Leigh Kerr, president of Kerr Government Strategies, has been hired to represent us on the legislative front.

A constant stream of bills and proposals are submitted during a General Assembly session. We weed through them to find which ones might affect our industry and make a determination about whether we should support or oppose them.

Most of the more outrageous bills die a natural death on the floor, but it is sometimes surprising which ones gain traction in



Grape Press

Tastings are an integral part of seminars at our technical meetings, where the emphasis is on viticulture research and education.

committee. We then bring these back to the Board, discuss a strategy and start talking with our legislators.

We have many friends in the House and Senate that love our farmers, and the strength and popularity of the wine industry gives us a major boost. Of course, wine is an alcohol product which will always be a target for some.

“Keeping the Farm in Farm Winery” has been the latest push, as we try to protect the privileges given to farm wineries in the current code. Over the past several years, a few counties and a few legislators have heard complaints from their constituents about wineries. In drilling down, they seem to be about a few businesses that are neither farms nor wineries.

For many businesses, the easiest way to become an event center or build what they want when they want is to obtain a Farm Winery license. Some legislators, with support from other industries, have threatened to take some or all of these privileges away.

We decided that it would be better to fix the language ourselves instead of waiting until someone else does it, perhaps in a way that is harmful to real farm wineries.

The latest bill, which has passed the House of Delegates and Senate and is on its way to the governor's desk, helps define more clearly what it means to be a Farm Winery.

Under this legislation, a Farm Winery will

either have to grow grapes or make wine, or both.

Moving Forward

I bring up these items, projects, and committees so that all our members are aware of what your VVA Board is doing for you and the industry. Our members recently elected Phil Ponton as a new at-large board member and re-elected AJ Greely as Treasurer.

If you are interested in serving on a committee or running for a board seat, please reach out to any one of us. We would love to have your involvement and help.

This issue of Grape Press is being published just after the Winter Technical meeting, and I hope many of you attended and enjoyed the program.

We started with our New Growers Workshop, which is one of my favorite sessions. The workshop is intended to lend a hand to our newest growers.

This was followed by two days of informative sessions. We discussed labor costs and options, H-2A worker requirements, the growing interest in hybrids, reduced-spray varieties and bio-sprays. We also provided industry updates, and of course, there were wine-tasting panels each day.

And now, we're beginning the process of planning next year's technical meeting. If you have thoughts or suggestions about what you'd like us to focus on, please let me or any of the other board members know.

Cheers!

2023 Technical Meeting BY THE NUMBERS

- 225 Attendees
- 25 Trade Exhibitors
- 29 Participants at New Growers Workshop

Tom Kelly Named Grower Of the Year

AWARD, from page 1

Tom, of Strasburg, Va., has been involved in viticulture for 25 years as a vineyard worker, vineyard manager and consultant, managing the planting of more than 70 acres of vines over the course of his career. He is currently vineyard manager at Rappahannock Cellars in Huntly, Va., an award-winning winery growing 30 acres of wine grapes.

Tom served on the VVA Board of Directors for ten years, including two terms as association president from 2013 to 2016. As president, he tackled a number of issues of concern to the wine industry, including finding ways to help small vineyards become more profitable.

Current VVA President Skip Causey said that when he first joined the VVA Board he was struck by the role Mr. Kelly played in helping new board members, like himself, ease into their roles.

“He has served tirelessly on the board and several of its committees,” Skip said. “He has a deep understanding of viticulture, and he knows how to help the entire industry grow and prosper. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Tom Kelly for what he has done to help the industry.”

Tom said his “greatest reward” in volunteering for the VVA came from the people he got to know. “We had this project and that project, and we put on some really great meetings,” he said. “Those are all things to be proud of. But what I got out of it more than anything else were the relationships with people. That’s what the VVA really meant to me — the wonderful people.”



Beth Walker Green, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, presented the VVA Grower of the Year Award to Tom Kelly, who has worked in viticulture for 25 years.

Chris Garsson / Grape Press

He began his viticulture career in 1989 at Sand Castle Winery in Erwinna, Pa., at a time when he “was looking for something different” to do. He came across an ad for the vineyard, which he thought “seemed different enough.”

“My new employer handed me a hoe and put me in the fields where I’ve been ever since,” he said. “I knew nothing about grapes or wine at the time, but I fell in love with the whole process.”

Tom said that during his three-year stay at Sand Castle, he learned the basics of viticulture, from pruning and hilling up to canopy management and harvesting, and was introduced to winemaking.

He then entered the Virginia wine industry, working at Oasis Vineyards in Hume and later Totter Creek Vineyards (now Thatch Winery) in Charlottesville, where he spent four years as vineyard manager and assistant winemaker.

In 2004, he was named vineyard manager at

Rappahannock Cellars, which then had a total of 22 acres of vines on three separate sites. With the birth of his son in 2013, Mr. Kelly left Rappahannock to form his own consulting firm, Kelly Vineyard Services. While he continues to serve clients as a consultant, he resumed his role as vineyard manager at Rappahannock in November 2019.

The award was presented to Tom by Beth Walker Green, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry. Ms. Green also congratulated the VVA on its 40th anniversary, and said, “It’s amazing to see how the Virginia wine industry has grown during that time.”

“That is due to all of you and your hard work in helping to grow and improve Virginia’s vineyards,” she added.

The VVA honors one of its members with the annual Grower of the Year Award, which recognizes active participation in the Virginia viticulture community and a track record of commitment and service to the industry.

VVA Elects Treasurer, At-Large Board Member

Grape Press

The VVA has re-elected AJ Greely to serve as treasurer and elected Phil Ponton as an at-large VVA Board member for 2023-24.

Phil, Native Son Vineyard, has had a lifelong career in the Virginia wine industry and now owns and operates a cow-calf operation and a vineyard in Barboursville on a Century Farm that has been in his family

since 1856. After meeting Felicia Rogan in 1982, he began establishing her vineyard and winery at Oakencroft in Charlottesville. In 2022, Phil completed his 40th year at Oakencroft. During that time, he was responsible for coordinating and overseeing all vineyard and winery operations.

Due to his experience growing hybrid varieties at Oakencroft, he advocates these varieties as an important factor in the future of the wine industry.

AJ, who is beginning her second term as VVA treasurer, is the winemaker at Hark Vineyards in Earlysville. She has spent over a decade in the Virginia wine industry, working in the vineyard, in administrative and tasting room capacities, and in the cellar. She also spent years as a bookkeeping and professional organizing consultant.

Elections were conducted online this winter and results were announced at the VVA meeting in Charlottesville in February.

Your Reminders for Early-Season Grape Disease Management

By Mizuho Nita

Grape Pathologist, Virginia Tech

As 2023 gets under way in the vineyard, here are reminders regarding early-season grape disease management:

Phomopsis cane and leaf spot

One of the diseases you need to consider soon after bud break is Phomopsis cane and leaf spot. It causes minor leaf spots, which are more evident to our eyes, but necrotic lesions cause more critical damage on shoots and rachis. It also causes berry rot; however, it is not common with wine grapes because of our spray programs.

The Phomopsis pathogen requires water for infection, and Phomopsis spores can germinate in a relatively cool environment (the upper 40s). This pathogen produces spores in spring from previously infected canes and cordons. Thus, springtime rain events are ideal for the development of Phomopsis. It is vital to protect young tissues when they come out from the older canes and trunks because we do not have any curative fungicides against Phomopsis.

This disease typically takes a while to establish in the vineyard. It may take four to five years for Phomopsis to become noticeable after you start a new vineyard. However, once established in a vineyard, getting rid of this disease is difficult.

The fungus survives in canes and trunks that were infected in previous years, and it can cause long-term damage to cordons and trunks. Some cultivars, such as Viognier, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Seyval Blanc, are more susceptible to Phomopsis than others.

If rain events are coming into the picture after bud break, mancozeb (FRAC = M3, Penncozeb, Dithane, Manzate, etc.), Ziram (FRAC = M3), and captan (FRAC = M4) are useful protective materials against Phomopsis. Since shoots will proliferate quickly, you may need to spray several times against Phomopsis, depending on how much rain we receive.

One or two applications, starting from one- to two-inch shoot length and repeated seven to ten days apart, are sufficient in a typical year. After that period, your downy mildew or black rot applications, which happen in the late spring, will cover Phomopsis.

QoI fungicides (FRAC = 11), such as

About and Pristine, and SDHI (FRAC = 7), such as Luna Experience, Miravis, and Aprovia, are effective, too. However, you probably will need these materials for the latter part of the season to control other diseases (e.g., ripe rot and bitter rot).

Anthracnose

The other disease 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 in addition to the list above, Topsin-M (FRAC = 1) is also known to be effective.

Dormant Application

A dormant application of lime sulfur (10 percent in our study, or 1 percent with Sulforix) is effective against both Phomopsis and anthracnose. With the corrosiveness of lime sulfur, it is hard to justify the money and time; thus, the low rate of Sulforix is appealing to me.

A study done in Michigan found that a mancozeb application was also successful; however, with the limit of the volume of mancozeb applications per year (about 19.4 pounds active ingredient per year per acre, but please check your label), you may wish to keep it to protect green tissues.

We found fixed copper to be ineffective. The dormant fungicide application can reduce Phomopsis to some extent; however, the application's efficacy is not strong enough to allow you to skip any preventative fungicide applications to be sprayed soon after bud break. The dormant application knocks down spores produced on the infected canes, but it won't protect new shoots. Therefore, you still need to protect your shoots when they emerge.

Although I see the benefit of the dormant application, it is just one more application to make. Also, it is more effective to spray mancozeb or captan soon after the bud break. Thus, I typically recommend a dormant application of lime sulfur only if you have a severe Phomopsis and/or anthracnose issue and you need an extra kick to your regular preventative application after bud break.

Learn more on
Mizuho Nita's blog:
**Virginia Grape
Disease Updates**

The dormant application is less likely to be effective against downy or powdery mildew because both are polycyclic diseases with a rapid secondary cycle. Even if you can knock down the initial inoculum, they can rapidly produce the next round of spores, especially under favorable conditions. The winter survival structures of these pathogens are very tough, so I don't think the dormant time fungicide application is the best approach.

The dormant application of lime sulfur is used for ripe rot prevention in Japan. However, there is not much data to confirm whether the efficacy is valid. If you are interested, please let me know so we can set up a trial.

Downy Mildew

Downy mildew has become one of the most problematic diseases for us in the past several years. Especially if you had an outbreak in 2022, you might wish to tighten up your spray schedule to better protect your vines. Some people refer to the "three tens" rule — 10 cm shoots, 10 mm rain, and 10 C in temperature (4 in, 0.4 in, and 50F) — for the initial spray timing, which basically means for us that we need to spray soon after bud break. (This rule may make more sense in arid regions.) This will give us another reason to spray for Phomopsis so that the same spray covers for downy mildew.

Protective materials for downy mildew are mancozeb (FRAC M3) [Gavel has mancozeb + zoxamid (FRAC 22)], captan (FRAC M4), fixed copper (FRAC M1), Revus or Forum (FRAC 40), or Zampro (FRAC 40 + 45), or Ranman (FRAC 21).

NOTE: There are increasing cases of Revus-resistant downy mildew isolates in Va. Plus, resistance to Ranman is known among downy mildew pathogens of other crops. Kick-back materials are phosphonate (Phostrol, Prophyt, etc. FRAC P07) and Ridomil products (FRAC 4).

10 Wineries Earn Place in Governor's Case for 2023

Gov. Glenn Youngkin has presented the 2023 Virginia Governor's Cup to Delfosse Vineyards & Winery for the 2021 Screaming Hawk Meritage — a signature estate red blend of 50 percent Petit Verdot, 30 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 10 percent Cabernet Franc and 10 percent Malbec.

The prestigious award was presented during the annual Virginia Governor's Cup Gala held in Richmond on Feb. 23. In its 41st year, the competition received 614 entries from over 115 Virginia wineries, cideries and meaderies.

"It is an honor to present this year's Virginia Governor's Cup to the team at Delfosse Vineyards and Winery," said Gov. Youngkin. "Delfosse is adding an exciting new chapter to its venerable history and we look forward to all they do next as Mountain and Vine Vineyards and Winery." (Located in Faber, Delfosse plans to rebrand to Mountain and Vine Vineyards and Winery.)

The 2021 Screaming Hawk earned the highest average score from a panel of respected judges who evaluated the wines based on appearance, aroma, flavor, commercial suitability and overall quality.

The wine will be featured alongside 11 other wines in the Virginia Governor's Cup Case, a collection of the competition's 12 highest scoring wines.

They are:

- Delfosse Vineyards & Winery, 2021 Screaming Hawk Meritage
- 50 West Vineyards, 2020 Petit Manseng
- Barboursville Vineyards, 2021 Vermentino Reserve
- Barren Ridge Vineyards, 2019 Petit Verdot
- Jefferson Vineyards, 2021 Petit Manseng
- Jefferson Vineyards, 2019 Meritage
- Mountain Run Winery, 2021 Petit Verdot
- Paradise Springs Winery, 2021 Petit Verdot
- Pollak Vineyards, 2017 Meritage
- The Williamsburg Winery, 2019 Petit Verdot
- Trump Winery, 2016 Blanc de Noir
- Trump Winery, 2019 New World Reserve

See the list of Governor's Cup gold, silver and bronze winners.



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 the link or event.

Virginia Tech Plans Spring Workshops

VIRGINIA TECH/VCE WILL OFFER a series of free viticulture workshops this winter and early spring. Registration is required: <https://forms.gle/PkxTVeqeNfzhnJVu9>

March 29: Grape Disease Management Workshop, from 2 to 4 p.m., Loudoun County Extension Office, 750 Miller Dr. SE Suite f-3, Leesburg, plus an online (Zoom) option. The workshop's aim is to help growers prepare with disease management strategies for the season.

March 30: Grape Disease Management Workshop, Grape Disease ID (with Spanish translation), from 2 to 4 p.m., Loudoun County Extension Office, plus an online (Zoom) option. The workshop will focus on disease identification by studying pictures of symptomatic grapevines. The session will be translated into Spanish to help vineyard workers improve their identification skills.

March 31: GrapelPM.org training and Q & A, online from 1 to 3 p.m.: GrapelPM.org is an online tool to help you organize your pesticide sprays. You can use it to keep up with inventory, plan your spray, share your spray plan with co-workers, and create reports for the WPS and EPA.

April 7: GrapelPM.org training and Q & A, online from 1 to 3 p.m.: GrapelPM.org is an online tool to help you organize your pesticide sprays. You can use it to keep up with inventory, plan your spray, share your spray plan with co-workers, and create reports for the WPS and EPA.

Webinar to Focus on Climate Change Implications

Penn State Extension, Virginia Tech and Cornell University are again offering free, live webinars designed for eastern U.S. grape growers and winemakers. Upcoming: "Climate Change Implications for Grapevine Production in U.S. Wine Regions," March 7.



The 2023 Eastern Winery Exposition and Conference will be held March 14-16 at the Lancaster County Convention Center in Lancaster, Pa.

Information listed in Grower's Datebook 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 or cancellations.