

GRAPE PRESS

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the VIRGINIA VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION

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HARVESTING QUALITY

The grapes are in, and around the state this vintage is expected to be an impressive one. At right, Nicewonder Farm and Vineyards team member Sophia Bellamy is pictured with their Merlot. For details and data, **Regional Reports** begin on Page 4.



Kevin Sutherland



Above, by Skip Causey; right, by Ben Sedlins

Cindi Causey harvests Merlot at Potomac Point Vineyard, and, right, the work to bring in Cabernet Franc starts early for Walsh Family Wine.



WINTER TECHNICAL SET FOR FEB. 21-22!

Save the date for the VVA's annual Winter Technical meeting to be held in Charlottesville. **More details on Page 2.**

A Vineyard's Rewarding Year Also Saw Unique Challenges

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Industry Tackles Va. Grape Glut

At a Glance

- ▶ The Commercial Grape Report survey is now collecting new data from growers on unreported fruit. Please respond.
- ▶ The state, VVA and VWA are on the lookout for alternative markets.
- ▶ Going forward, right price your grapes and contract early.

By Skip Causey

Potomac Point Vineyard & Winery

Both the wine industry and the wine grape industry have shifted direction, yet again!

For years, Virginia experienced a shortage of the grapes needed to supply our wineries. All of the industry associations have listed this shortage as one of their most important concerns in their long-term strategic plans. This was seen as one of the main restrictions for increased growth and quality in Virginia wines. In fact, a current goal of both the Virginia Wineries Association and the Virginia Vineyards Association is to “promote the growth of quality vineyard plantings to fulfill the needs of the wine industry.”

But while it has been a safe investment over the past ten years to start a vineyard or increase the size of an existing one, the current glut of Virginia grapes over the past two years has the industry rethinking these goals.

This glut of Virginia wine grapes in the 2022 and now the 2023 harvests has shocked the vineyard industry. The tonnage of unsold and dropped fruit has been staggering and devastating to many farmers.

When this happened last year, it could have been seen as an anomaly of a bountiful year. As we entered the new year with several wineries

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INDUSTRY NEWS



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.

VVA Winter Technical Set for Feb. 21-22

Registration opens Jan. 3 for the 2024 VVA Winter Technical Meeting to be held Feb. 21-22 at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville. The impacts of climate change on vineyard management and the worldwide glut of wine and grapes are scheduled to be two of the main topics.

Look for updates **on our website** and in your email. **To reserve a room at the Omni using a VVA room rate, click here and book by Jan. 19.**

Exhibitor registration will open in early December through our website.

Nominate Candidates for VVA Board Seats

Nominations for four VVA Board positions — president, vice president, secretary and an at-large member — are being accepted through Nov. 27 prior to elections. Terms begin in 2024. Please email the VVA office if you're interested or know of a candidate. Include the person's name, farm name, and your reasons for the nomination.

Who Should Be Our Next Grower of the Year?

If you know someone who deserves to be VVA Grower of the Year, please email your nomination to the VVA office by Dec. 7. The annual award recognizes an active VVA member with at least seven years of experience managing or operating a commercial vineyard of at least five acres. The nominee must be an active participant in the Virginia viticulture community, have a record of service to our industry, and have the respect of their peers. Please include the person's name, farm name, and your reasons for the nomination.



Registration is open for the 2024 Eastern Winery Exposition and Conference to be held March 12-14 at the Oncenter Convention Center in Syracuse, N.Y. Before they register, VVA members can contact our VVA office for a code entitling our members to a registration discount.

Information listed in Grower's Datebook is current at the time of publication, but for all events, check directly with each organizer for the latest on any changes or cancellations.

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Tackling Va. Grape Glut

PRESIDENT, from page 1

reducing or cancelling grape contracts for 2023, it became a definite trend. This trend has vineyard folks asking, what is going on and will it continue?

Looking for Answers

Have we over-planted vines or have Virginia wine sales slowed? These questions are being explored in the next few months by the VVA and the VWA.

In an effort to determine the extent of this shift, we have added a few questions to the Virginia Commercial Wine Grape Report. These questions will focus on how many tons of different varietals could not be sold or were sold to wineries outside of Virginia. We are also asking about any losses due to weather issues.

The Virginia growers and vintners who have been in the industry for 20 years or more have seen this happen before, but not on this scale. The last grape glut experienced in Virginia was in the 2008 and 2009 vintages. This glut followed the economic crash and Great Recession, which led to a great pullback on discretionary spending.

This turned around a few years later, with economic growth and a great expansion in the number of wineries opening. The number of wineries in Virginia doubled and almost tripled from 2005 to 2020.

After the dry year of 2010 which resulted in lower yields, and the rain deluge in 2011 which again lowered the yields, we quickly moved back into a shortage of quality Virginia grapes. This shortage continued through the following decade.

With this shortage, there was a rush to plant. The VVA and the VWA both agreed that increased planting was a top priority, both to improve quality and make it unnecessary for our wineries to purchase out-of-state wine grapes.

Many larger wineries with ample land took their destiny into their own hands and planted what they needed to avoid being held hostage to prices and supply. From the last two commercial grape reports, we can determine that more than 200 acres of vineyards have been planted annually for the past three to four years. At maturity, this would translate to an additional 500 tons of extra grapes each year.

The new plantings have given the Virginia wine industry a 43 percent growth rate not only in vineyard acreage but also in tonnage

in the past 10 years. The number of recently planted non-bearing vineyards will add another 1,500 tons of fruit to the market in the next few years. The lion's share of these grapes (87 percent) are vinifera, which will find a home more easily than hybrids. This correlates to a 90 percent increase in tonnage in a decade.

Normally, we would be celebrating this growth in our industry. However, any thought of celebration ended with the first unsold fruit.

Reevaluating Pricing and Plantings

What do we do now? Several vineyard owners are marketing their grapes earlier. The VVA Exchange page already has 2024 fruit for sale and many vineyards are looking for longer term contracts. Everyone is looking at their pricing against the market, and most are working harder to ensure high quality.

Some varietals have seen a big drop in the price per ton, especially in the hybrids that have not been selling as well. We have heard about several vineyards pulling out low producing or lower-quality vineyard sites, plans that had been toyed with for years. It may be cheaper to pull them out versus continuing to manage and tend these vines each year. Everyone is re-evaluating growth plans.

If owners are moving forward with new plantings, it will be grapes for themselves or with solid contracts. Watch hybrid plantings. As I reported in my last article, some grapes are harder to sell than others. Hybrids make up more than 80 percent of the tonnage for sale on the VVA Exchange page but account for less than 15 percent of Virginia's total acreage.

A Slowdown in Orders and Wine Sales

Why are we here? Besides the new plantings, several Virginia wineries reduced or cancelled grape orders, first for 2022 and again for 2023. When talking to these wineries, you learn that these steps were taken for one of two reasons.

First, several wineries continued producing based on past sales plus expected growth, even through the Covid years. The expected growth did not happen, and wineries found themselves with excess inventories building up in their cellars.

Second, some wineries in certain pockets are actually experiencing a slowdown in sales. We will be hearing about this national trend of slowing wine sales at the VVA Winter Technical Meeting in February.

These two trends together caused this

Growers are asked to respond to the second half of the 2023 Virginia Commercial Grape Report survey sent in November by providing data on unreported fruit. You can also access the survey by clicking here.

perfect storm. As for lowering inventories, that will correct in time and wineries will right size their production based on sales (and projected growth). The larger trend of slowing wine consumption will be watched and analyzed as we wait for these Millennials to stop buying seltzers and move up to Virginia wines!

What can we do to help? Each vineyard will need to make its own battle plan for the 2024 and 2025 harvests. Right price your grapes and contract early.

The VVA and VWA are also looking into alternative sources for grape buyers like out-of-state wineries. We are working with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which is in constant contact with other East Coast states about their needs.

Survey Will Provide Critical Data

The second part of the survey for the 2023 Virginia Commercial Grape Report will help us determine the extent of the problem. Normally a crush pad report filled out by wineries, this second part now includes a few questions for independent vineyards about fruit that is not yet included in the data because it was not harvested or was sold out of state.

Knowing our actual processed tonnage is always important but finding out which varietals are being dropped unsold or sold out of state will help everyone in future planning. We will be compiling this information quickly and getting the report out hopefully before the VVA Winter Technical Meeting.

Please fill out the survey as soon as you receive it (or see link above) so that we can make this the most complete commercial grape report yet.

Knowledge is power and this group can be very powerful if we work together to get beyond this situation.

Remember, we are only one extreme early frost away from a grape shortage. Don't worry, I just knocked on wood!

► SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

“With a wet July and August, September rolled in with hot, sunny and dry conditions. That made decisions on when to harvest easy, and the fermentations were spread out.”



Kevin Sutherland

Chardonnay on harvest day at Nicewonder Farm and Vineyards in Bristol.

By Kevin Sutherland
Nicewonder Farm & Vineyards

We only work one day during harvest. That day lasts from the end of August to the end of October!

With a wet July and August, September rolled in with hot, sunny and dry conditions. That made decisions on when to harvest easy, and the fermentations were spread out. This trend lasted until Oct. 19 with one day of rain, and then the hot dry weather returned.

Our Viognier and Chardonnay really made up some ground during September and were harvested Sept. 15 and 22, respectively. Brix was elevated across all varieties, which is leading to slightly higher alcohol levels. The acids held up very well while the Brix was building.

Cab Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot came in between 23.5 and 24.5 brix, 3.5 to 3.6 pH, and 5 to 6 grams per liter TA. All the reds really benefitted from those conditions, and the color and phenolics were just incredible.

Petit Verdot was the last to be harvested on Oct. 24, and that wrapped us up on the vineyard side. Average cluster weights were 25 percent lower than last year, which was surprising given the wet season we had.

I caught up with Jennifer Brown, owner and winemaker at Spinning Jenny Vineyard, Draper. She told me that they had a good growing season except for some late frost in May that reduced the yield of her Pinot Gris and Chardonnay vines.

There was sufficient rain throughout the summer to facilitate vine growth without too much moisture which reduced disease pressure, she said. Overall, the yields at Spinning Jenny were about the same as 2022, though with less Chardonnay and Pinot Gris and more Norton. Also, the vines still looked healthy through the end of October which is encouraging for next year.

Spinning Jenny harvested grapes in three lots — Pinot Gris and Chardonnay in early September, Vidal Blanc in late September, and Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and

Norton in early October.

“Many thanks to all our enthusiastic volunteers who came out to help pick, crush, and press just over 5,000 pounds of grapes,” Jenny said. “We look forward to 2024, when we expect about 100 newer vines to begin producing which should increase our harvest yield by about 1,000 pounds.”

Here at Nicewonder, the 2023 wines are in the tanks and barrels, and we’re ready to give our attention to the 2022 reds in the barrels. Those wines have really developed nicely over the past year.

I hope everyone has a little time to relax as we go into winter!

Editor’s Note: Kevin Sutherland is secretary of the VVA 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 any topic that would be of interest to other growers.

► NORTHERN VIRGINIA

“From all indications this year will produce some excellent wines, though significantly less wine than in previous years.”

By Dean Triplett
Greenstone Vineyard

Vintage 2023 is all but done for the vast majority of growers as I write this report the week before Halloween. From all indications this year will produce some excellent wines, though significantly less wine than in previous years. The yields at my vineyard were down about 20 percent from what I would call historical averages.

Last year saw very high yields across the region. Part of the reason for the lower yields this year has got to be the drought we've been in for most of the growing season. August saw 1.85 inches in Leesburg. September had more rain with 6.61 inches falling. Most of this rain fell in just two events, one on the 11th and the other on the 24th. October so far has seen only .57 inches.

The upside of this drought has been excellent disease control, with fewer sprays needing to be applied. The downside of course was the lower yields. However, since berry flavors were mostly excellent, with smaller berry size in many cases, these in combination should make for some outstanding wine.

I was fortunate enough to talk with several growers in my region about this year's vintage. Here's what they told me:

Toting Water for New Vines

Aury Holtslag, vineyard manager for Sunset Hills Vineyard in Purcellville, said his vineyards in both Loudoun and Shenandoah counties experienced a year of low-yielding, much bolder fruit compared to past vintages.

“March through May seemed to be typical — rain fall here and there with normal spray schedules to combat the looming downy mildew,” he said.

“We planted 3,200 new vines across four vineyard locations, which was the single largest planting in my career,” he added. “As June rolled around, we found that our new vines were in need of some water, which we obliged by filling a 300-gallon tote, carried by a Bobcat, and hand-watered every two weeks. As the grass started to yellow and drought warnings were issued, these laborious irrigation methods started to increase in frequency. Conversely, we reduced our spray.

“Paying close attention to relative

humidity, we started to spray only after particularly wet mornings,” he said. “Sparse rain events occurred through August but were more infrequent in the Shenandoah vineyards. This was great for mature vines but resulted in the unfortunate loss of some of the new plantings. Brix climbed rapidly during August and September while pH seemed to stay on par with past vintages.”

Aury said he started taking berry weights to track the growth throughout the season. “This data became essential in determining whether Brix was climbing due to maturity or water loss, in which the latter seemed to be the case in July and August. Luckily, the berry weight started to climb again in September and plateaued in October. We let our reds hang for longer than usual to allow for rich flavor development. This resulted in much darker skins, chewy tannins and higher brix across the board.

“Unfortunately, there was also a 30 percent decrease in yield. At the end of the day, or season rather, this was a vintage of quality over quantity.”

Ben Sedling, vineyard manager of Walsh Family Wine in Purcellville, told me the following:

“We finished picking our last block of Petit Verdot today, Oct. 13, ahead of the rainy weekend. Overall, our whites hit ripeness quite early, and we had to scramble at the end of August to get them in with the acids we wanted.

“The reds are going to be powerful and concentrated, and we tried to thread the needle between achieving phenolic ripeness and not having too high potential alcohol. Our berry sizes were definitely down, so my yield predictions did in fact tend to be overly optimistic. A very fun vintage for sure, in no small part because I was on the sprayer way less than normal! We did have a small planting that went in this spring that did quite poorly, but you gotta take the good with the bad.”

High Sugars

Tremain Hatch, Viticulture Extension Agent and co-operator of Zephaniah Farm Vineyard in Leesburg, said he was thankful for the 2023 growing season, which he said brought “wonderful fruit quality.”

Tremain said he had three major observations about the growing season at Zephaniah.

“First, the pH values this year were lower than in years past. Second, for the most part we had really high sugars, most likely due to drought stress. The third observation and the one outlier on fruit quality this year is a block of hybrids that got into a severe water deficit.

“We farm this site on shale-based soils,” he added. “We watched as these vines had the lower third of their canopy become defoliated by drought stress in early September during the heat wave. The fruit lagged behind in sugar accumulation after that episode.”

I want to thank the three gentlemen for giving our readers their insights for vintage 2023. The vast majority of growers I've talked to echoed their observations. My additional comments may be unique to me.

Fewer Predators

I noticed much less predation this season from most of the critters that seem to plague me each and every year. Raccoon, deer, bird, and insect damage all seemed to be down. I still have a ground hog that likes my fruit, but aside from the small crop losses due to him, or her, I was very happy with this year's outcome.

I did see spotted lanternflies in my vineyard, but only five of them. So far so good, but I fully expect those numbers to increase in the years ahead.

As I mentioned in my last report, there was a glut of fruit on the market this year. I was very fortunate to find a home for all my grapes, but I know of some folks who were not so lucky. Hopefully, the smaller overall crop loads this year will cause a rebound in demand next year. It just seems like such a waste to have unsold fruit in such an excellent season.

It's such a good feeling to have a great season behind us. The team that works with me is fantastic, and this year their hard work really paid off. I can't wait to taste the wines that are made this year from across the region and state.

Here's to a well deserved off-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 any topic that would be of interest to other growers.

► EASTERN VIRGINIA

“... We had mild temperatures with substantial rainfall in the months of August through October.”

By **Gonzalo Ortiz**
Rustic Vintage

Here in the eastern part of the beautiful Northern Neck of Virginia, where my vineyard is just finishing its second year — one year away from our first harvest! — we had mild temperatures with substantial rainfall in the months of August through October.

August brought a total of two inches of rain, with about an inch of that falling on Aug. 28, which would have forced harvest decisions with some white grape varieties in the area. August had only three days with temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit, with the highest temperature day reaching 91 degrees.

September brought 5.75 inches of rain with 1.5 inches on Sept. 9 and 10, which would have forced some red grape harvest decisions in the area. September had three days over 90 degrees F with the highest temperature coming in at 93 degrees.

It was dry from Aug. 28 up until the rain on the 9th of September which coincided with a large portion of the harvest season. Sept. 23 brought 2.75 inches of rain which could have impacted late harvest picking decisions.

October has been dry with about an inch and a half of rain with 3 days over 80 degrees and the highest temperature hitting 82 degrees.

For those not familiar with this area, I can put it in context with some comparisons to other areas in which I have worked in vineyards.

In the Southeast of Pennsylvania, for example, we would pick Petit Verdot around the third week of October. In Northern Virginia, we would pick Petit Verdot around the first or second week of October. Here I would have picked Petit Verdot by the third week of September, if not the week before, and the fruit would have exhibited exceptional color, turgor, and chemistry. It is

an entirely different and beautiful viticultural struggle. Harvest here is earlier and seems to be much more condensed.

Regionally, I saw a couple of vineyards with almost complete defoliation due to downy mildew in early September and a few more in early October in both the Southeastern and Central regions of Virginia. For those vineyards I am hopeful that the winter will be mild so that they do not lose too many vines to winter injury.

For the rest of us in the Eastern and Southern portion of Virginia I hope we get our three days of at least 15 degrees F to keep Pierce's Disease in check. I saw that a new injectable product is now available for Pierce's Disease which is registered in Virginia. I hope that the research continues and that more products are forthcoming as this disease seems to be the biggest limiting factor for vine health and longevity in these areas.

On the business side as commented last year at this time the number of grapes for sale posted on the association site continued to increase. For those that could not find a home for the fruit of their hard work this year, I hope you can stay above water until next year and that the market changes favorably for you.

On our property we began trellis work on the six and a half acres we planted last year. Because the area is windy and the soil is sandy loam to a depth of over six feet, I made sure to drive, rather than set, our anchor posts down to five feet.

We did have our challenge with downy mildew on our site but thankfully, we were able to keep it in check and had functional canopies into the last week of October without a hard frost yet. I suspect we will have our first hard frost in the first or second week of November.

I am not sufficiently satisfied with the growth of the nine acres we planted this year, so unlike last year I expect to cut this year's plantings back down to a couple buds to have better and more uniform growth in

2024 for trunk establishment.

Establishing the trunks last winter for the 2022 plantings has proven to have been the correct call, and we are seeing good, uniform growth this year.

I plan to start pruning mid-December to get everything done on time.

I am extremely grateful for the help of my father on the farm as we go into our third year as I do not have any employees, and he could be doing anything else he desires in retirement besides helping me!

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 any topic that would be of interest to other growers.

Help Us Report On Vineyards in Central Virginia

The VVA Communications Committee is looking for a VVA member who can become a regional reporter for Central Virginia. Our regional writers volunteer to report on events, conditions, and other observations of interest to growers in Central Virginia, often reaching out to fellow growers for information.

We'll offer plenty of guidance and advice to get you started. To discuss becoming a regional reporter, **please email Communications Chair Bob Garsson.**



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An Unusual But Rewarding Year

Easier Growing Season Still Experienced Unique ‘Hiccups’

By Jim Law
Linden Vineyards

I’ve put together some notes on the 2023 growing season and harvest. This is not a vintage overview, but rather comments on some of the highlights of an unusual year. In the future, climate change will exacerbate fluctuations in temperature and rainfall. These notes center around my observations in that regard.

Chardonnay millerandage (hens and chicks) and Merlot coulure (no berries) reduced yields around 10 to 20 percent. This was due to temperatures falling below 50 degrees Fahrenheit during flowering. In the past, we had only worried about rain during flowering. Now we can add another worry.

For the three summer months of summer, we had just two rainfalls of any significance. This resulted in the easiest growing season in memory. Now I know why West Coast growers are so laid back: they don’t have much to do. Very little effort extended in leaf pulling, hedging, shoot positioning, cluster thinning, spraying, mowing, and weed control.

Downy mildew was non-existent, but powdery mildew did make an appearance. For the first time in decades, we saw some PM in Chardonnay clusters. A number of years ago sulfur had been dropped from our June spray program (mainly because of eye irritation when doing hand canopy work). I may have to reintroduce low levels in Chardonnay.

The vines walked a fine line between hydric stress and severe drought stress (we don’t irrigate). Older vines (over ten years) and blocks on more water retentive soils (more clay) did fine and were in good balance. Young vines on shallow granite suffered. Small soil differences made big impacts.

Veraison arrived on schedule and was fast and completed early. Post veraison, ripening accelerated every week. Harvest began 7 to 10 days early and continued tracking early. I attribute this to the drought. The vines stopped their vegetative cycle in late July and were therefore able to put all their energy into ripening instead of growing additional unwanted leaves.

Juice and wine yields (amount of liquid per ton of grapes) were down due to small berries, thick skins and lots of pulp. Sorting tables ran fast and not many hands were



Photos by Jim Law

Above, low temperatures during flowering led to Chardonnay millerandage (hens and chicks) at Linden Vineyards. Below, vines walked a fine line between hydric stress and drought stress. Young Cab Franc vines on rocky granite, left, suffered; older vines and blocks on more water retentive soils (more clay) were in good balance.



required. The reds destemmed cleaner than I have ever seen.

One concern was high Brix (potential alcohol) and low YAN (yeast nutrients). Sauvignon Blanc juice was measured at 25 Brix and 50 YAN. This set off alarms since it could mean the yeast would have trouble finishing fermentation. Sweet Sauvignon Blanc is not our style.

We ceased adding yeast nutrients many years ago, but I was not comfortable taking a chance on the reliably obstinate Sauvignon Blanc. Jonathan Weber (Linden’s winemaker) had other ideas. So started the great debate.

Every source we consulted felt that in this case, additions were necessary. I was ready

to order nutrients when Jonathan reminded me of the current quote on our winery blackboard: “The Courage to Do Nothing.” We did nothing and the wine is finally dry after nearly ten weeks, several sleepless nights, and a lot of stirring.

Reds also fermented slowly, but high alcohols seemed to prematurely pull out some bitterness from seed tannins. In some cases, we drained and pressed before fermentation was complete. Press fractions are uncommonly rich with velvety long tannins. They will be very important during blending trials.

Even with a few hiccups, 2023 will be a benchmark vintage.

How to Prevent or Treat Pathogens When Pruning

By Mizuho Nita

Grape Pathologist, Virginia Tech

Pruning creates many wounds to the grapevines, and some pathogens take advantage of it. Examples include: *Botryosphaeria* canker, or Bot canker; Petri disease, also known as Esca; Crown Gall, and *Eutypa dieback*. In addition, some of the other pathogens such as *Phomopsis* can cause disease on canes and cordons.

Typical symptoms of these diseases are discoloration of leaves and shoots. Also, when you cut into the infected trunk/cordon, you will see discoloration of the vascular tissues.

Silent Killers

These pathogens act like a “silent killer,” slowly invading the tissue and shortening the life of the vine by 5-10 years. So, the infection today may not cause any obvious symptoms for a few years.

On the other hand, with younger vines (up to 5 years or so), these diseases can progress rapidly to cause a decline of the infected vine within a year or two. Therefore, even if it may not benefit you immediately, preventative measures taken every year will pay off as a more productive vineyard in the long term.

A number of cultural practices can help. They are your first line of defense.

First, avoid rain! Check the weather forecast before pruning and make sure you will get sunny days to ensure the wounds will dry out in a few hours and there will be enough time for wounds to heal. It may take up to two weeks under low temperatures (40s), and about one week in mild temperatures (50s).

Double pruning, which uses two passes, is also helpful. It starts with a rough pruning in the winter or early spring where you cut the shoots at 15-18 inches from the cordon. Final pruning follows in late spring.

One advantage of double pruning is that you do not need to spend a long time in cold winter weather to perfect your pruning. Another is that final pruning takes less time because you have already removed long shoots from the wires. Finally, even if the first pruning wounds take time to heal and are infected, they will be removed in the second pruning.

Cleaning your tools is also important. You can do it after pruning heavily infected vines or after several rows or at the end of the day.

The risk of transferring the spores from one vine to the other is low; however, it is a good idea to keep your tools clean.

You can spray 70 percent alcohol (rubbing alcohol) onto the pruners. Alternatively, you can make a 10 percent Clorox solution (10 parts Clorox to 90 parts water) in a bucket, and dip your equipment for 1-2 minutes.

It is okay to leave the first-year canes in the vineyard, but make sure they are placed in a row-middle to be chopped with a mower. However, if you make a big cut to second or older woods, it would be best to remove the old cordon from your vineyard. There is no benefit in keeping the larger dead wood in or near your vineyard.

“Avoid rain! Check the weather forecast before pruning and make sure you will get sunny days ...”

Also, if you experienced black rot, make sure you remove infected berries from the vineyard.

Chemical Management Practices

In addition to cultural strategies, there are several chemical management practices you can employ to guard against diseases from pruning wounds.

Topsin-M or Rally can be applied as a paint-on or as a spray. Please see the labels for detailed rate and application information. (If your label is old, you can download a new one that includes information on paint application.) One of the potential advantages of Topsin-M is that it works well against *Botryosphaeria* that is very common in Virginia. Please note that Topsin-M has a 2-day REI.

B-Lock (Nutrient Technologies, CA) is a paste that can be ordered from Farm Supply Company in California. VitiSeal, which contains essential oils, can be ordered from several suppliers. These pastes protect wounds

from infection by *Eutypa* and *Esca*. However, *Eutypa* is a minor problem in Virginia. In fact, a survey of wood canker diseases by Dr. Phillippe Rolshausen in 2008 did not find a single positive *Eutypa* case from Virginia samples.

The label of Topsin-M for pruning wound protection is for both paint and spray, thus, you can mix B-lock and Topsin-M. Based on our preliminary research results, one application may not be enough. Thus, for now, I would like to recommend two applications, one as soon as possible after pruning, and another a week after the first application, which should cover the duration of wound healing.

The other regular wound paints, such as latex paints, are also commonly used, but the general consensus among growers, not only for grapes but other crops as well, is that the paints are not very effective. In addition, there was a study done with trees that showed that they may have a negative impact due to trapping of moisture underneath the paint.

“Dreft” detergent with 30 percent aqueous suspension (weight to volume) showed efficacy against *Eutypa*; however, we do not have efficacy data on common trunk diseases in Virginia such as *Botryosphaeria* canker.

Phomopsis Cane and Leaf Spot

Last, but not least, I would like to mention *Phomopsis* cane and leaf spot. The pathogen of this disease infects shoots in the spring and produces spores on infected canes the following spring. Here, the proximity of the infected cane to the new shoots is important because pores drip down or splash from the infected canes with rain. This is another reason not to keep old dead canes on your vines.

One option is to apply a dormant application of fungicide (lime sulfur at 10 percent or Sulforix at 1 percent) against *Phomopsis*. Since Sulforix works with a much lower rate than lime sulfur, my recommendation is to use it.

However, the dormant application won't let you skip the in-season protective application. Whether you do the dormant application or not, make sure to protect new shoots starting when shoots are about 1-inch long.

An application of mancozeb was reported to reduce the level of *Phomopsis*; however, the data on the timing of applications are lacking for our region.