

WASHINGTON STATE GRAPE SOCIETY
March, 2004 Newsletter
Editor: Jack Watson

Grower Alert!

The reduction of vineyards in California, has caused an overabundance of grape stakes, some of which, have made their way into Washington State. Scientists express *extreme* caution to growers as the stakes have been proven to house bugs, nematodes and soil issues that could contaminate your vineyards. This could potentially cause a serious problem for you or neighbors using the infected stakes. When in doubt, call one of the many researchers located at WSU-IAREC for additional information.

Reducing Concord Production Inputs

With the cash price for Concord grapes reaching all time lows, growers are looking for methods to reduce production costs. Fortunately, Concord grapes adapt well to mechanical cultural practices. Mechanical pruning is probably the one cultural practice change that can have the greatest impact on reducing labor costs and a large portion of total costs. Techniques have been established and the equipment is available to obtain good results for this method of pruning over hand pruning. By using mechanical methods, pruning costs can be reduced by 40 to 75%. Those that rely totally on mechanical methods receive the greatest cost benefits.

The Washington Concord industry now has almost 20 years of experience with mechanical pruning methods. Both

research and innovators in the industry have shown good results with these techniques. The biggest obstacle seems to be getting over the unruliness of a mechanical pruned vine. And while aesthetics are nice, with prices for grapes as low as they are, it doesn't make sense to be growing grapes because they look nice.

There has also been complaints about material other than grapes (MOG) getting into the harvested product as a result of mechanically pruning the vines. The feeling is that all the older wood becomes brittle and breaks off during the harvest operation and mixes in with the harvested grapes. This may happen in some vineyards but not all mechanically pruned grapes have a lot of MOG and there are methods to filter out this material.

A distinction also needs to be made between mechanically pruned and minimally pruned vines. Mechanical pruning is the use of any automatic device that assists or completes the pruning tasks. Minimal pruned vines are therefore mechanically pruned but as the name describes, very little. The only pruning done on minimally pruned vines is the removal of canes which hang down below the area where they are not functional, usually by a simple mechanical "skirting" operation.

We are currently mechanically or minimally pruning Concord vines that have been trained for hand pruning. Perhaps grower's acceptance would increase if more information was

available on best methods to train, fertilize, irrigate and manage pests for mechanically pruned vines. This is the direction research and industry efforts should be focused.



Annual Meeting News

2003 Memorial Scholarship Winner: Kristine Hagen

Kristine Hagen is in her final months of obtaining a Master degree from WSU. She attended a college level school in Tours, France, after graduating in 1988 from Mountain View High School in Vancouver, Washington. During her time abroad, she studied the French language and culture and learned to appreciate wines. Kristine received her B.S. in microbiology and French in December, 2001. In the summer of 2001, Kristine worked as a viticulture intern with Stimson Lane. She was also awarded Chateau Ste. Michelle's Viticulture & Enology Scholarship. Kristine Hagen is the Washington State Grape Society's 2003 memorial scholarship winner of \$500.

Lloyd H. Porter, "Grower of the Year" Award for 2003 Jerry Czebotar

This grower grew up in eastern Washington and graduated from high school in the early 70's. There has been a long history of family grape growing, beginning with his grandfather. Our Grower of the Year used his imagination

at a very young age; when playing in his sandbox, he would plant twigs, pretending they were grape cuttings. His dream became a reality, when in the mid-70's Jerry started row crop farming. Today, he farms approximately 75 acres of Concords and Niagaras. Jerry has served both as a director and as a delegate for National Grape and has served on the Washington State Grape Society Board of Directors. He has two children, two-step children, two granddaughters and a wife named Dolores. The Washington State Grape Society Board of Directors was very pleased to present at their November Annual Meeting the 2003 Lloyd H. Porter, "Grower of the Year" award to Jerry Czebotar.

Walter Clore Award for 2003 Andy Schilperoort

Andy grew up on a small farm and graduated from a local Yakima Valley high school. He has had 24 grape harvests to his credit. Our Walter Clore Award winner attended college in the Midwest, where he met his wife. Two out of their three children were born there. In the summer of 1979, a vacation was planned to return to the Yakima Valley to visit; with it came a desire to look for a job in the Northwest. Yakima Valley Grape Producers had a fieldsman opening and in the fall of 1979, Andy and his family moved back to the Valley and immediately turned his young wife into a "grape Widow". But as his wife, Karen states, "But hey, that's OK! The grape industry has been very good to Andy and I think Andy has been very good for the grape industry." It was an honor and a privilege for the Washington State Grape Society Board of Directors

to present the 2003 Walter Clore Award to Andy Schilperoort. Congratulation Andy!

Tidbits on the Annual Meeting

If you missed the November 20-21, 2003 meeting, you can take advantage of reading most speaker presentations by going to our website: www.grapesociety.org. The members only page has the 2003 posted topics. Prior speeches from 2000-2002 are on the Proceedings page, just look for the tab at the top of the home page.

Dr. Eric Leber, Heritage College, Toppenish, has been working on innovative products made from the by-products of grape waste. If you missed his presentation at the annual meeting, there is an article in the February issue of Good Fruit Grower magazine. Dr. Leber is now in the process of searching for a commercial kitchen to do experimental recipes using grape byproducts. If you can help, please call Dr. Leber at 509.865.8500 ext. 3305.

Wine Grape Establishment & Production Costs

The total cost of establishing a Chardonnay wine grapes vineyard in eastern Washington through year four is \$16,368 per acre. This is the figure arrived at by Trent Ball and Ray Folwell, Ag Economists at Washington State University Pullman. This and other economic information is included in their cost study conducted on the wine grape industry. Wine Grape Established and Production Costs in Washington, 2003 (Extension Bulletin 1955) has been

published and is available at Extension offices (\$2.00)

The authors introduced this bulletin with an impressive set of statistics:

The Washington wine grape growing/producing sector is one of the fastest growing industries in the state. Since overtaking New York as the second largest wine producer in 1998, Washington wine acreage has increased from 16,820 total acres to 28,000 in 2002, and there are still intentions to plant even more vinifera wine grapes. In comparing July 1999 with January 2002, the bearing acreage for white varieties has increased 21%, while the red varieties' bearing acreage has increased 74%. Chardonnay continues to be the leading white variety, with Cabernet Sauvignon slightly edging Merlot as the most popular red variety.

Since 1977, wine grape production in Washington has nearly doubled from 62,000 tons to a record high 115,000 tons in 2002. The average price received by growers during 2002 was \$878 per ton, down slightly from the previous year. With the increase in wine grape acreage, record high production can continue to be expected in the next few years.

They conclude that a large initial investment is required to establish a vineyard in the first year. The first generation of revenue occurs in the end of the third year, but does not entirely offset the total costs. The annual costs are covered in the fourth year of establishment and a positive cash flow starts for both Merlot and Chardonnay

varieties. At the price and yield levels used in this study a positive profit is received in mature vineyards.

Do You Know The Ephraim Wales Bull Story?

Mr. Ephraim Wales Bull experimented with native Concord grape seeds on his farm, back in 1849. If you were to visit the Bull's farmhouse which is still standing today, you would find the original parent vine of all the Concord grapes in the world.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Ephraim Wales Bull's discovery of the Concord Grape, the Concord Museum opened "The Concord Grape: An American Classic," an entertaining and nostalgic tribute which has been on exhibit since 1999. The Concord Museum is located in historic Concord, Massachusetts at the intersection of Lexington Road and Cambridge Turnpike. For further information contact the Concord Museum at (978) 369-9609 (Taped information). E-mail: cml@concordmuseum.org; Web site: www.concordmuseum.org

Ag & Forestry Leadership Program Seeks Applicants

Are you looking to sharpen your leadership and communication skills? Then the Washington Agriculture and Forestry Leadership Program is for you. This two-year program offers intensive study and travel for leaders in our agriculture, forestry, fishing and rural community. This program is currently seeking qualified candidates for Class

XXVI. Application deadline is April 30, 2004. For more information phone 509.926.9113 or www.agforestry.org

Fieldman's Breakfast

The first Thursday of every month, Jack Watson hosts the Fieldman's breakfast. Beginning at 7:15 a.m. at the Barn Restaurant in Prosser, growers, scientists, fieldmen and others meet to discuss grape issues currently facing the industry. Dr. Doug Walsh presented his latest findings on cutworm control at the March meeting. Everyone is welcome . . . Come and take advantage of these informative meetings.

We Want To Hear From You!

This is our first email newsletter and **our last one mailed by "snail mail"**. The newsletters will also be posted on our website. Members that have not reported their email address may do so by emailing: deb@grapesociety.com. As we grow and expand our e-services, we would like to hear your opinion. Give us feedback on newsletter and website. Tell what you like or don't like about these membership services.

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