



## North Texas Vineyard News

August 9, 2010

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### Good Time ... To Be Inside

This heat and drought are harsh. I appreciate the relief brought about by harvest arriving early, although some grapes still hang. Yields are smaller, but loaded with flavor and potential for some fantastic wines. Clay in the soil profiles have helped maintain badly needed moisture.

### Soil Moisture – Knowledge Is Power

It's a challenge to know when and how much water is needed to maintain vine health while not compromising grape quality. Reading soil moisture from soil sensors allows for fine tuning irrigation use, rather than providing water on a hunch. Water has become a precious commodity.

There is an array of remote moisture monitoring equipment available; however, manually checked readers are the least expensive. Watermark sensors (underground piece) are the same, regardless of the sophistication of the type of reader purchased. You can upgrade later, if desired.



The most helpful data are from sensors that have been planted in tandem: two are placed in the same spot but at different depths - 8" and 20-24". This allows you to track water movement through your soils. You get a feeling of how water works through your soil after reading the sensors before irrigating, 24 hours after irrigating, before and after

a rainfall event, and so on. With a clearer picture of water movement in the root zone, determining water needs is easier.

If your soil type is the same throughout your block, one set (of 2) sensors - in the middle of the middle rows is enough. You could add another set on the end of a perimeter row for more data input. Additional sensors for different soil types will add additional understanding. Connected to a weather system, the sensors add invaluable data for managing the vineyard.

If you are still not interested in monitoring the moisture in your vineyard soil, then install the equipment anyway...perhaps it will trigger a thunderstorm.

Thirsty vines should appreciate a good soaking once grapes have been harvested. Drought stress can produce or exaggerate nutrient deficiency symptoms. Apply a light fall fertilizer on vines only after a thorough watering.

## What's in The Bins?

### Material-other-than-grape (MOG)

MOG refers to objects that wind up in a bin of harvested grapes – insects, stemjacks, leaves, wood, metal, rocks, etc. When crushed with the grapes, MOG can be detrimental to wine quality. Green tissue - leaves, stem, petioles – contribute herbaceous or green flavors. Many insects have strong odors that give off flavors and aromas. Objects like metal or rocks can damage equipment.

Prevention begins in the vineyard where keeping vines and trellises well maintained will lessen the MOG at harvest. During hand harvesting, it is possible to select out MOG before it reaches the bins. MOG must be removed after harvest from machine harvested grapes. Whether harvested by hand or machine, the goal is to remove as much as possible before crush.

MOG is a harvest quality characteristic that can serve as a point of possible deduction in purchase price. Quality characteristics can be considered for

compensation or deduction in a contract. Quality characteristics to start with are sugar content (Brix), acid content (TA), pH, MOG, physical damage or defects, and disease. Tonnage (maximum and minimum) needs also to be agreed upon.

Whether verbal or written, now is a good time to consider harvest parameters for 2012 purchase agreements, while facts and figures are fresh. Wineries preparing for 2012 should be interested in 2011 harvest data and post-harvest vine care. Our Texas Wine & Grape Industry continues to grow in size and in reputation, an indication of increased quality standards. Early and frequent communication and consistent records can only help to continue the trend.

## Calendar

### NORTH TEXAS HANGTIME

Oct. 10 Post harvest Pow-wow, What to Plant?  
Denison, TX  
More info to follow.

### PROSPECTIVE WINEGRAPE GROWER WORKSHOP

August 26, 2011, 8:30-3  
Harris County Extension  
3033 Bear Creek Drive  
Houston, TX 77084  
Fritz Westover (281)855-5608  
Fran Pontasch (254)968-4144  
\$150 per person, \$250/couple, includes lunch  
Register Online: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/>  
Or by phone: (979) 845-2604

### GRAPE CAMP 2011

Grape Camp is an annual event hosted by the Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association.  
November 6-7 Sunday – Monday,  
Fredericksburg, TX  
<http://www.txwines.org/grapecamp/default.asp>

*Please don't hesitate to contact me for further information.  
I look forward to hearing from you,*

*Fran*