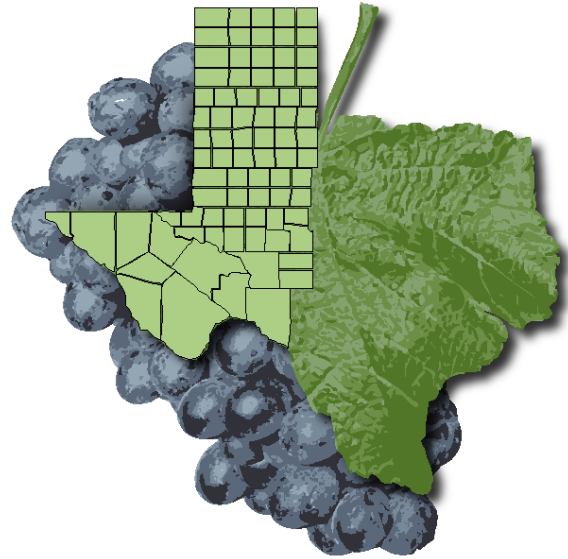


Vitis

High Plains and West Texas Vineyard News



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What's been going on?

This has been a hectic year for your viticulture advisor. Starting on April 1st I have been trying to catch up with the duties involved with this position and attempting to get the year off to a good start.

One of the most challenging parts of this job is the size of the region. With my delayed start I have attempted to work with the “put out the fires” system, rather than attempting to get to each individual vineyard without a site visit being requested. This allows me to better utilize both my time and my budget to make the biggest impact

on the region. If I have not yet visited your vineyard, please know that I will get there soon.

In addition to responding to grower requests, I have been able to establish a number of vineyard demonstrations in an effort to begin to answer some of the questions that exist in the region.

The demonstration plots that I have been able to establish involve herbicide drift mitigation, fruit set issues, evaluation of grow tubes, and fruit load issues. The purpose of these demonstrations is to provide new

information that will potentially benefit growers in the region and across the state.

Herbicide drift has once again reared its ugly head with not only 2,4-D damage but with glyphosate drift also showing up in many vineyards on the High Plains. I have seen damage from one of these two herbicides in every vineyard that I have visited in the past 4 to 6 weeks. Fortunately, the damage has been minimal and I don't expect any long-term damage. However, it is possible, especially with glyphosate, that this herbicide damage could result in damage showing up again next season. Glyphosate can be retained in the vine and when buds break next season, residual damage could appear.

After looking into the research that has been done in many other states and working with Dr. Hellman, we initiated a demonstration to look into ways to reduce the short and long term effects of herbicide damage. The plot that was selected includes three treatments:

1. Fruit Removal
2. Tipping Damaged Shoots
3. Complete Removal of Damage

These treatments are compared to untreated 'check' vines.

Thus far the progress has been a little unexpected. I am anxiously awaiting harvest to determine the full benefit or lack of benefit with each treatment.



Fruit removed from 2,4-D damaged vines

The next demonstration deals with poor fruit set in several vineyards on the southern High Plains. This problem has been a source of significant yield loss in these vineyards for the past several years and as I have been on unrelated visits to other vineyards I have been surprised to see that the problem is more wide spread than initially suspected. The problem appears to be common in varieties that are prone to vigorous growth.



Poor fruit set in Merlot vineyard on the High Plains

Another issue that has been a source of questions for the region's growers has been the use of growth tubes. The questions have ranged from: "Should I use grow tubes?" to "When should I remove them?" I am looking into the type of grow tube used and how it affects growth and lateral

development. I have laid out a trial that uses two of the most common color types used: tan and blue/green.

Grow tubes are typically used for protection from herbicides, rabbits and hail storms. These are the most common threats in this region although there are many other threats...growing grapes in Texas is NOT easy. I will be comparing shoot growth as well as lateral development.

Early on in the trial it seems as though the tan colored tubes significantly reduce the development of summer laterals. This reduces the amount of time required to train vines compared to no tubes or the blue/green tubes. I am looking forward to having a complete report for the regions growers over the winter.



Measuring shoot growth with one of my “assistants”

Fruit load has been a big issue this season as the entire state is looking at its biggest crop in many years. With the new acres that have been planted over the past 7-10 years many growers are looking at getting their first significant harvest. Favorable growing conditions have prevailed across much of the state and the fruit load is very impressive.

The abundant crop load has brought a storm of questions from growers regarding the correct cropping level for a particular variety. The best answer to this question is “it depends.” The quantity fruit that can be fully matured by a vine depends on a number of factors including the number of leaves per shoot and the amount of light that penetrates the canopy and reaches the leaves and clusters. The impact of fruit drop on the quality of the mature fruit will differ if the crop load is adjusted early in the season very close to pollination verses later in the season. Early fruit drop may result in faster or more even ripening, but may also result in increased berry size. Fruit drop later in the season, during or after veraison can improve crop uniformity, but may not hasten ripening. However, little work has been done in High Plains vineyards to determine the optimal time for cluster thinning to occur for fruit quality to be impacted.

The demonstration that I have established will look at the impact on fruit quality with a relatively late fruit drop. Brix levels will be charted and Dr. Hellman’s lab will evaluate the quality of each treatment at harvest. This could provide information that will allow more directed research to be conducted in the future.

The goal of many of the demonstration plots that I have across the region is to show growers what happens to the vines when a treatment is applied. However, the second objective is to provide a basis for further research. With grapes, information from just one year is just a good place to start. It will typically take a number of years to accumulate the needed data to

determine the true effects any given treatment will have. I hope these projects and many others will blossom as growers throughout the High Plains and West Texas look to continue to produce fruit that is of the highest quality.

TDA Announces New Round of Grants

Date: July 27, 2010

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANNOUNCES \$250,000 IN GRANTS TO GROW THE STATE'S GRAPE INDUSTRY

Funds will help Texas grape growers start new operations or expand existing ones

AUSTIN - As a result of the continuing interest in the state's booming wine industry, the Texas Department of Agriculture today announced it is accepting applications for its Wine Grape Investment Grant Program from Producers who wish to establish new vineyard operations or expand existing ones by at least five acres. A total of \$250,000 is available through this program.

"Texas produces an estimated 2.4 million gallons of wine every year and the industry contributes \$1.35 billion annually to the state's economy," Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Drew DeBerry said. "The industry is limited by the availability of grapes and these grants play a key role in sustaining the growth of Texas wine grape production."

Since 2008, TDA has awarded approximately \$500,000 in matching program grants to 18 Texas vineyards. Grant recipients matched these awards with their own capital investments totaling \$2.8 million. The maximum grant amount that may be awarded to a single vineyard is \$25,000.

The Wine Grape Investment Grant Program is housed under TDA's Rural Economic Development Division. Applications will be accepted through Aug. 12, 2010. For program details, producers may visit www.TexasAgriculture.gov and click on Grants/Funding.

Texas Wine Industry Facts:

- Texas is the fifth-largest wine-producing state in the nation.
- Texas is home to more than 181 wineries.
- The Texas wine industry supports more than 9,000 jobs.

Rain on the Plains

The first two weeks of July brought an unusual amount of rainfall to much of the High Plains. Rainfall totals ranged from 4" to as much as 17" in some areas. Rains closed highway 84 between Tahoka and Lamesa for several days. The rain and cool temperatures resulted in problems with disease in several vineyards, specifically where rain prevented growers from getting into the vineyards to apply fungicides.

The other weather condition that has been out of the norm this season is cool temperatures. The average high temperature in July for Lubbock is 91.9°. This season Lubbock has not

had a single day that has reached 92 and only 2 that hit 91! However, I don't anticipate any further delay in harvest date at this point.

Having grown up in the High Plains area I will never complain about rain, but it would be nice to see some dry days from here through harvest to avoid any severe disease problems.

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