



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Viticulture Notes Vol. 30, supplement 30 September 2015

Tony K. Wolf, Viticulture Extension Specialist, Virginia Tech, AHS Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Winchester, Virginia

vitis@vt.edu

<http://www.arec.vaes.vt.edu/olson-h-smith/grapes/viticulture/index.html>

I. Current Situation.....	1
---------------------------	---

I. Current situation:

The unusually dry weather of August and most of September has dramatically changed and the outlook for the next 5 days looks pretty grim for grapes that are still hanging out there. A combination of low pressure over Georgia, a tropical depression (Joachin) currently nearing Bermuda, and a high pressure system advancing down from Canada are conspiring to make for an interesting weather pattern over the short-term. There are similarities here to what we saw with unrelenting rains around the same time in 2011. Tropical temperatures in the seventies and persistent wetting of fruit over such an extended period of time ultimately lead to fruit splitting, botrytis and other rots. The grower is forced to (a) pick early to avoid the destruction; (b) pick in the rain; or (c) wait and hope that *some* portion of the crop is salvageable after the rains. In my experience, grapes that are at or above 22Brix do not tolerate 5 days of rain; it becomes a matter of necessity to get them off the vine. Factors to consider are how sound the fruit currently is and what is the local area forecast. If the remaining fruit is starting to split and/or rot, and there is a break in the weather, I'd be inclined to bring it in. Parts of central and southwestern Virginia may see more than 12" of rain before the coming weekend is over. Northern Virginia – where there is still a lot of hanging crop, may see less than 5". How Joachin tracks is still very uncertain, but it is fairly certain that all of Virginia and much of the mid-Atlantic will receive significant rainfall in addition to what has already fallen (3" in the Winchester area yesterday alone). Botrytis was a significant problem with our Cabernet Sauvignon in the disastrous 2011 season and I put on an application of fenhexamid (Elevate™) fungicide (0-day PHI) during a break in our weather on Monday. I considered adding a neonicotinoid insecticide for fruit flies, but ultimately didn't, principally because we have not found them in our grapes thus far – although our entomologist has been routinely finding both spotted wing (*Drosophila suzukii*) and "regular" (*D. melanogaster*) fruit flies at our vineyard since early August. That said, I have heard reports of SWD being found in "tight-clustered" varieties such as Petit Verdot where some physical damage to the grapes might already have occurred.

I don't have a tremendous amount of faith that any spray application is going to protect us against the potential damage caused by 5 or more days of rainy weather, but our fruit (Petit Manseng and Cab Sauvignon) is in good condition and I felt that the botrytis-specific spray might help the remaining crop "weather" the storms. Of course, the weather forecast Monday was a little brighter than today's latest forecast. As an aside, we were able to harvest some of our Cabernet grown in root-restrictive bags last Thursday. The root-restricted vines are often advanced in grape maturity compared to non-root-restricted vines and the 5 to 7-day advanced development sometimes means the difference in getting the crop off before a significant rain event. We will take our chances with the weather but I'm certain that there will be much sorting required when we finally do pick sometime after the weekend. Good luck to those of you that, like us, still have some fruit hanging on the vines.

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.



Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu