

An aerial photograph of a vineyard, showing neat rows of green grapevines stretching across a hillside. In the lower portion of the image, several people are visible working in the vines, some using tools or equipment. The entire scene is framed within a large, dark oval shape on a light tan background.

5 Biggest Grape Growing Mistakes Sacramento, CA 2025

Let's Learn What Not to Do, While I Tell You What
You Should Be Doing to Grow Great Wine.

Wes Hagen. Native9 Wine and Hagen Consulting

weswines@gmail.com

WHO ARE YOU?

- Where are you from?
- Have you planted already? What cultivar/variatal. Size of vineyard.
- What are you hoping to learn today?

A Few Books To Buy:

- “Sunlight Into Wine”: Dr. Richard Smart
- “Grape Pest Management”: Univ. of California
- “Guide to Winegrapes”: Jancis Robinson

Good reading:

“Ancient Wine” by Patrick McGovern

“Natural History of Wine” DeSalle and Tattersall

“The Story of Wine” Hugh Johnson

“Prod. Of Winegrapes in Cool Climates”: Jackson and Schuster (New Zealand Perspective)

The BIG Question:

- In all things that you read and learn about viticulture, the BIG QUESTION should always be:
- Is this information pertinent to MY vineyard and MY specific site, climate, soil and vine varieties?
- If you can't confirm that it is, the information may not be helpful to improving fruit quality.
- I try to offer solutions and science that applies to all vineyards, but feel free to stop me and ask!

5 Biggest Grape Growing Mistakes

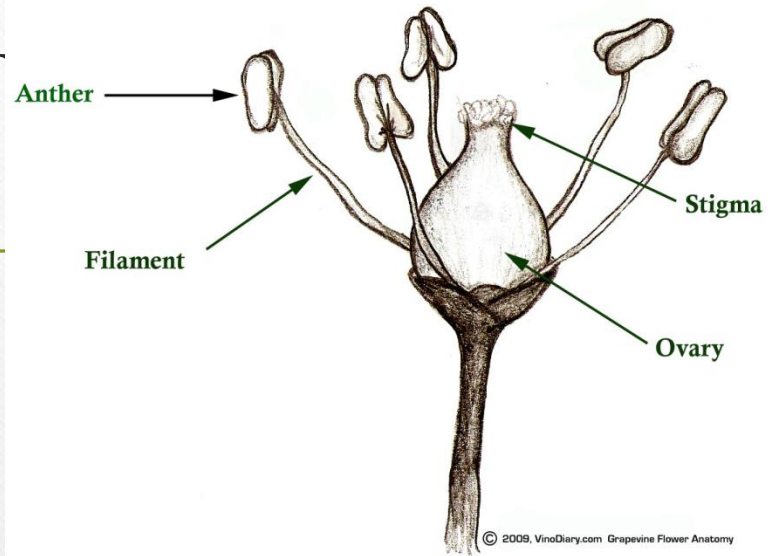
1. Failure to Understand Growing Cycles/
Physiological Needs of vine
2. Mistakes made during planning, planting and first three years.
3. Canopy management
4. Spraying: equipment, materials and timing.
5. Fruit consistency/quality at harvest.

1. Understanding Vine Physiology: Hermaphroditic Flowers



Cycle of Vine Growth/Physiology

- Vegetative growth:
- Vines need 250 hours under 45 degrees during dormancy for optimal budbreak and fruitfulness.
- Budbreak: mean daily temperature reaches 50 degrees
- Energy comes from carbohydrate stores for first three weeks, then leaves become net carb exporters.
- Lateral shoots in a proper canopy should be less than 10%-20% of leaf area.
- Fruit Bud Differentiation: Spring of previous year
- Fruit growth: Phase 1: Rapid 1-2 weeks after set, phase 2: Lag phase. (acid highest) Phase 3: Final swell and sugar development (600,00 cells in mature fruit)



2. Planning, Planting, Nurturing

- 1 hour of research/planning can save 1000 hours of labor, don't rush, do your homework.
- A test vine may work great in your backyard.
- Plant what makes the best wine, use local success.
- Look for changes in natural vegetation
- Hillsides give better frost protection.
- Take plenty of time to get the right cultivar/rootstock combo

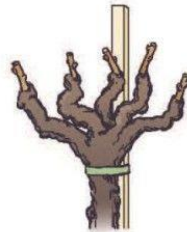
2. Planning, Planting, Nurturing Mistakes in the Process

- Planting before irrigation and trellising is ready.
- Unanticipated vigor: higher or lower vs trellis.
- Wish-planting. Plant what makes the best wine. It might not be what you traditionally love to drink.
- Pushing young vines to fruit too soon.
- Overwatering and wet feet.
- Grow tubes? Half gallon milk cartons?
- I like post hole digger and mycorrhizae to plant.
- Fertilize? Other planning/planting issues

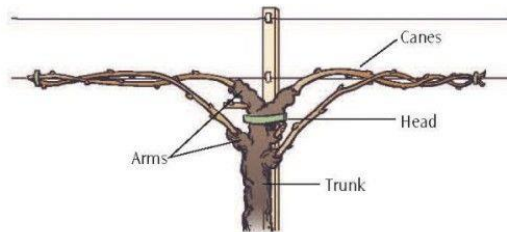
Spacing, Training and Pruning

- How many vines per acre? Space between vine x space between rows / 43560
- $8 \times 4 = 32$ 43,560 / 32 = 1361 vines per acre
- The 100% rule of spacing. Height to Space.
- Taking care of vines in the first few years.
- Which to choose and why.
- Keep the physiology of the vine in mind.
- #1 Consideration is always vigor and fruit quality.

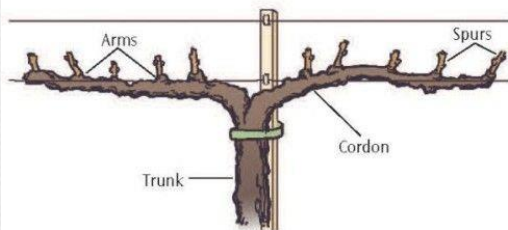
Pruning Style



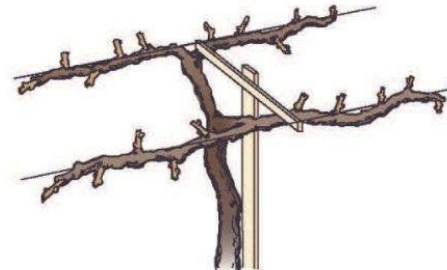
A head-trained vine with spur pruning



A head-trained vine with cane pruning

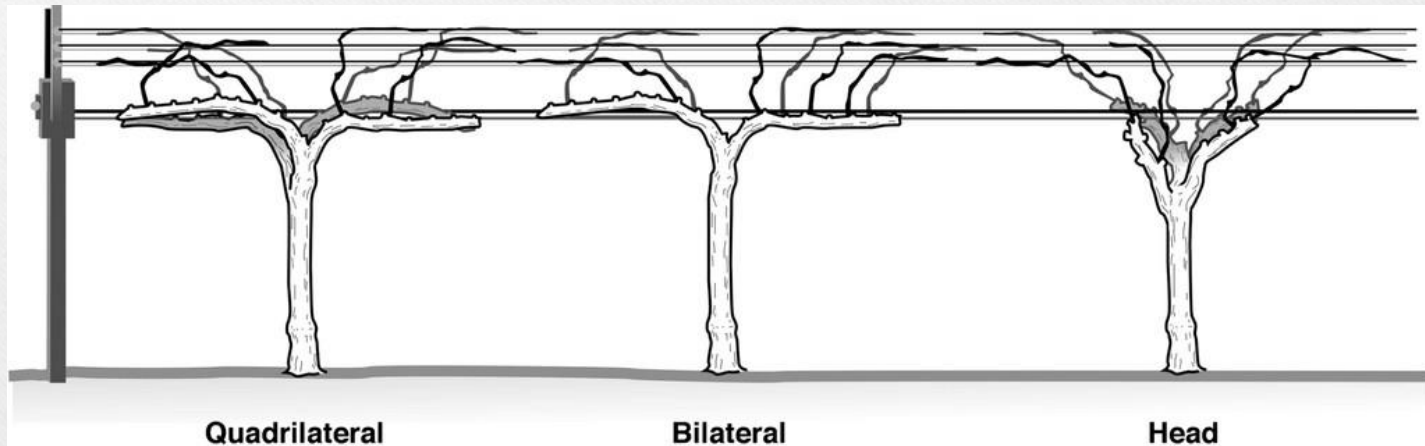


Bi-lateral cordon training with spur pruning

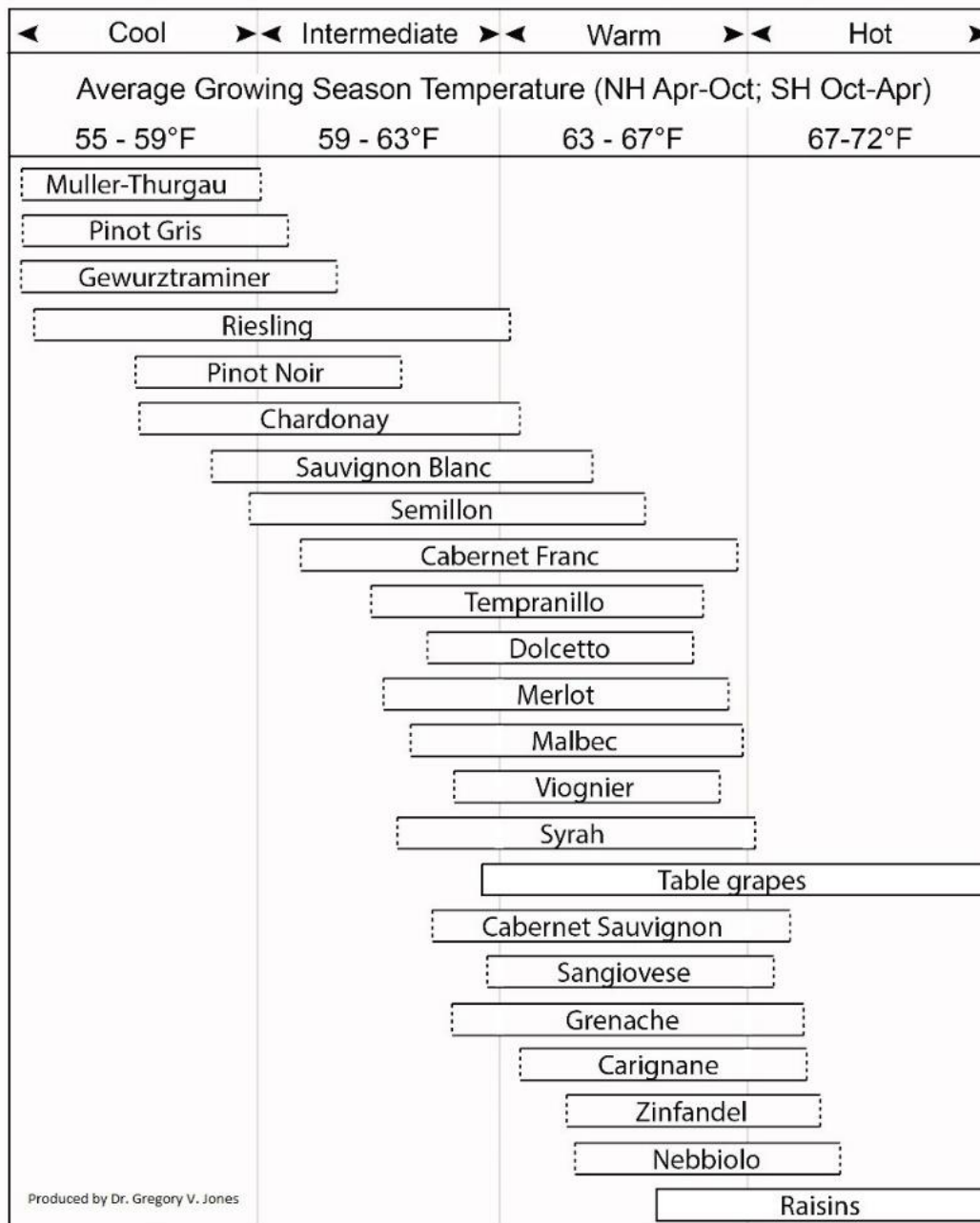


Quadra-lateral cordon training with spur pruning

Pruning Considerations



Grapevine Climate/Maturity Groupings



Produced by Dr. Gregory V. Jones

Length of rectangle indicates the estimated span of ripening for that varietal

3. Canopy Management

- Pull leaves after flowering.
- Never burn the fruit, so do careful field tests.
- Proper canopy opens fruit to sun flecking and wind. Why? Flavor and sanitation.
- 12-15 leaves per cluster in all climates.



3. Canopy Management



BEFORE



AFTER

3. Canopy Management



4. Spraying the Vineyard (Amateur Division)



4. Spraying the Vineyard (Pro League)



4. Spraying the Vineyard

- What are our goals? (Mildew is #1 problem I see in vineyards)
- Canopy management matters! Open canopy FTW!
- Size matters! Consider upgrading your spray rig!
- Coverage matters! Use Spray indicator dye to check.
- Both sides of the vine or one?
- What materials are legal? Elemental materials explained.
- Copper/sulfur for frost protection?

Checking Spray Coverage



5. Pulling the Trigger: Harvest

- One chance to make great wine per year.
- Consistency of fruit from vine to vine.
- Weather often decides for us.
- Under-ripeness and its impacts
- Overt ripeness and its impacts
- What's the difference between pH and TA?
- Is there a magic number for Brix or pH?
- Questions?

Questions and Answers

- Wes Hagen, Native9 Wine, Allan Hancock College
- Twitter: @weshagen @native9wine
- Email: weswines@gmail.com
- YouTube Channel: Wes Hagen
- First question is always free, after that you better buy some wine or a consult.