Grape Pruning and Bud Fruitfulness

Beginner Grape School
8 March 2019
Columbia, Missouri
Fruitfulness

- % buds that produce flower clusters
- Fruitfulness determined in buds during the prior year
- Inflorescences may or may not initiate in each bud
- Fruit buds can through processes other than cold damage become unfruitful

Photo credits: http://www.growingproduce.com/americanfruitgrower/?storyid=1434
“Bud”

- A “bud” occurs at each node on cane
- The “bud” composed of three “buds”
  - Primary
  - Secondary
  - Tertiary
- What is within the “bud”
“Bud”

- In each bud is a 6 to 12-node compressed shoot with primordial:
  - Leaves
  - Flower clusters
  - Tendrils.
Grape Anatomy

- Canes
- Spurs
- Renewal Spur
- Trunk
- Cordon Buds
- Head
How many Nodes?

VSP: 3 to 5 SHOOTS/FT

\[
\text{(10 SPURS X 2 BUDS)} / 2.5 \text{ FT} = 8 \text{ BUDS/FT}
\]

\[
\text{(3 SPURS X 2 BUDS)} / 2.5 \text{ FT} = 2.4 \text{ BUDS/FT}
\]
How many Nodes?

To many nodes

- Reduced brix in fruit
- Reduced fruit pigmentation
- Reduced shoot/cane diameter
- Increased disease pressure
- Maturation of wood poor
- Increased winter Injury

To few nodes

- Vigorous shoot growth
- Increase internode lengths
- Reduced fruit set
- Increase in fruit shading
- Increase in number of “bull canes”
- Decrease in bud fruitfullness
- Reduced cold hardiness
How much fruit?
3 to 5 shoots ft

- 4 ft cordon
  - 12 to 20 shoots
  - Each shoot = 2 grape clusters
  - 24 to 40 clusters
  - Each cluster 3.5 oz
  - 6.75 to 11 lbs per cordon
  - 2 cordons per plant
  - 13.5 to 22 lbs per plant

- 575 plants per acre
  - 2.9 to 4.8 tons per acre
Economics of the Vine

- 545 vines/acre
  10' row x 8' plant
- 15 lbs/vine
  8,175 lbs = 4.1 ton/acre
- ~3.5 oz/cluster
  70 clusters/vine
  3.6 lbs/bottle
  4 bottles (750 ml)/vine
  2,180 bottles/acre
- $1,400/ton = $5,740/acre
- $14.00/bottle = $30,520/acre
Training Systems

• Vertical shoot positioning (VSP)
  – Bilateral cordons 32 to 36” from ground
  – Catch wires above cordons
  – Shoot growth directed upward

• High Wire
  – Bilateral cordons 66 to 72” from ground
  – Shoots combined downward
Training Methods

Low-Cordon Vertical Shoot Positioning
Training Methods

High Cordon

Use for trailing grape cultivars

Low Cordon

Use for upright grape cultivars
Pruning and Training

Initial Pruning from planting to fruiting

High Bi-Lateral Cordon
Relies on downward combing of new growth
Balanced Pruning

Vegetative growth is in proportion to fruit load to ripen the crop

- Dormant pruning is first step in balancing the vine
- Amount of pruning is based on vine vigor
Balanced Pruning

Step 1: Quantifying Vine Vigor

- Weight of one-year cane pruning's
  - Roughly prune vine leaving extra buds
  - Weigh cane pruning's
  - Apply pruning formula
### Balanced Pruning

#### Pruning Formulas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grape Type</th>
<th>Formula</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>30+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Hybrids</td>
<td>20+10, 15+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hybrids</td>
<td>20+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European (Vinifera)</td>
<td>20+20</td>
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Example Balanced Pruning

Pruning Formula: 20 + 10

20 count buds for first pound of canes and an additional 10 count buds for each additional pound of canes

Cane weight = 1 lb: 20 count buds
Cane weight = 2 lb: 30 count buds
Cane weight = 3 lb: 40 count buds
Problems with Balanced Pruning

Hybrid Grape Cultivars Typically

- Multiple shoots from count buds
- Multiple clusters per shoot

Alternative

- 5 to 6 shoots/ft of vine
- Calculate number of clusters needed for yield
- Cluster thin and or shoot thin

Spare parts are good to have around
Balanced Pruning

Bring your experience to the vineyard

Pruning Formulas

- Grape cultivars perform differently based on vineyard site
  - High vigor sites
  - Low vigor sites
- Each vine is an individual

After pruning a few vines using balanced pruning – you become calibrated
Pruning and Disease Management

Remove old dead wood from grapevine

- Cordon Renewal

- Trunk Renewal
  - Own rooted versus rootstock

- Liquid Lime Sulfur Application Timing
  - Bud swell
Large Pruning Cuts
Large Pruning Cuts

Avoid large pruning cuts until early summer

Large cuts and trunk diseases
  • *Botryosphaeria* spp.
  • *Eutypa lata*
  • *Pestolotiopsis*
  • *Phomopsis viticola*

Time of pruning, size of wound and wood age all play role in infection

Wound susceptibility declines at high temperatures
Pruning and Sanitation

First: always have sharp pruning shears. Sharp shears make clean cuts that heal quickly compared to rough cuts.

Removing cane prunings from the vineyard if practical. If going to this effort take the next step and destroy the prunings.

No need to sterilize pruning shears.

Remove old cluster rachises and mummy berries.
Pruning Timing

What to prune first should be prioritized based on a grape cultivars susceptibility to winter cold injury

1. Prune American cultivars first
2. Prune cold tolerant hybrids (Vignoles, Seyval, Norton)
3. Prune cold sensitive hybrids (Vidal, Traminette, Chambourcin)
4. Prune Vinifera that are less winter cold sensitive, Cabernet Franc
5. Prune Vinifera that are more cold sensitive

Use your experience to decide as vineyard to vineyard variation will play a role
Remember that you grow with your vines. Each year you learn something about your vineyards growth and production. Apply that knowledge as you prepare to prune your vines.

Select sentinel vines in your vineyard
- Quantify dormant cane weights
- Quantify cluster weights and numbers
- Quantify crop load
Thanks to my colleagues at the Grape and Wine Institute

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