

# Post-harvest vineyard operations and preparing for 2019

BY DR. ALEXANDER LEVIN

As the growing season draws to a close, the tasks left to do in the vineyard and their relative impact on fruit quality lessen. Usually we are simply waiting for the fruit to ripen to the standards set by the purchasing winery. We might make picking decisions based on little more than logistical issues like tank space in the winery or the availability of picking crews.

This can be a time of anxiety for the wine-grape grower, whose risk increases with the likelihood of adverse late-season weather. Once the fruit is harvested, what is left to do in the vineyard?

## Post-harvest irrigation

After harvest, the traditional practice is for growers to irrigate deeply to “put the vines to bed wet.” Occasionally, fertilizers are added at this time. But post-harvest irrigation has been linked to late-season root flushes and increased carbohydrate storage. While there is some physiological basis for this practice, it originated from other growing regions and may be less useful for ours. As we learn more about post-harvest vine physiology, we have seen that (1) no more new roots grow in autumn than do throughout the growing season (i.e., roots grow all season long), (2) most carbohydrate storage occurs prior to harvest, (3) the impact of post-harvest fertilization is significantly less than early season fertilization—plus there is an increased risk of leaching nutrients below the rootzone and into streams and waterways, and (4) vines use less water when they don't have fruit.

Nevertheless, there is definite value to keeping the canopy alive for as long as possible, because there still is *some* uptake of nutrients, *some* root growth, and *some* storage of carbohydrates. But if we consider the amount of time left in the growing season and the ever-shortening day length, we can easily see that there isn't much going on in mid-October compared to mid-August. Vines need to take up water to obtain nutrients and continue to function, but they simply aren't using that much water late in the season. For example, mature grapevines grown in the Applegate Valley will use only 25 gallons per vine in all of October compared to more than 70 in all of August. Also, those numbers reflect what is needed

to keep vines fully irrigated. Irrigating less than is required can help vines enter dormancy earlier, thus keeping them more tolerant of early winter freezes. This practice can actually promote a more even budbreak the following spring. Moreover, factoring in October rainfall may remove the need to irrigate at the end of the season altogether. Clearly, irrigating more than is required is a waste of water and can leach nutrients and potentially prevent vines from hardening off completely.

## Plan for next year

It's no secret that there is tension between growers and winemakers. But one of the things I always tell wine-grape growers is to have an open line of communication with their winemaker. What? Listen to the winemaker?! Blasphemy! Honestly, I will be the first to admit that I like to give winemakers a hard time, particularly when they start to explain to me about how grapevines grow. However, since we may not be involved as deeply in the winemaking, perhaps we should do a better job of listening to their comments on the resultant wine. After all, we aren't growing table grapes here, and the ultimate destination and purpose for our fruit is to be made into wine. Most importantly, that is the *business* end of the business. This is a team game, and there is no better way to improve your viticulture than discussing the results of the previous year with the winemaker.

Concomitantly, this is why it is important to keep good records of all of your practices. Did you fertilize? Did you irrigate? If yes, when and how much? Were your cultural practices dependent on cultivar or did you farm everything the same? When you sit down to taste your wines with the winemaker, having these records can help to orient you both and allow for a better interpretation of the season as it was. In the end, it will inform your practice going forward by giving you a sense of what worked and what didn't work. In this way we can begin farming with more intention rather than just to grow some fruit.

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**Apple Outlaw Cidery and Orchard.** Visit Apple Outlaw at the Grants Pass Growers' Market on Saturdays from 9 am - 1 pm and at Pacifica every month or so. On October 14, Pacifica will feature Apple Outlaw ciders and gypsy music by Dayton. Fall is harvest time in the orchard and time for pressing 750 to 1,200 gallons of cider each week through November. More than 18 varieties of cider will be brewed. Check out the Cider Club and event calendar online at [appleoutlaw.com](http://appleoutlaw.com) and their Facebook page. 541-846-1718.

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**Applegate Country Club.** Every Monday night through December 17, Applegate Country Club (ACC) hosts a community dinner and poker game, which raises funds for a community member who needs a hand. Dinner, always \$10 a plate, starts at 6 pm. The professionally managed poker game starts at 7 pm. There is a \$25 buy-in and folks are asked to register before the Monday event. All the details can be found on the ACC website under “Events” at [applegatecountryclub.com](http://applegatecountryclub.com). Open Wednesday - Sunday, 12 - 9 pm • 15090 Highway 238, Applegate.

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**Apricity Vineyard** is poised to open the first estate winery tasting room in the lower Applegate. The renovation, which includes eco-friendly hempcrete walls, is nearing completion. The vineyard, planted in 2014, is Certified Naturally Grown and managed with a focus on natural agriculture. The first estate vintages (2016) are in bottles, and the table white, named Runner White, is available now at Urban Cork in Medford. The full 2016 lineup will be released soon. Family owned and operated Apricity Vineyard is west of Grants Pass at 5719 Jerome Prairie Road • [apricityvineyard.com](http://apricityvineyard.com).

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**Barbie's Bling Shack.** This upscale resale store opened in April in downtown Applegate, right next to the Applegate Store. In addition to high quality clothes, shoes, and fashion accessories, sisters Marcia and Barbara also offer home decor and unique framed art, featuring the work of Oregon artist Kim Virgin. The Shack is open Thursday - Sunday, noon - 4 pm, and by appointment. 15095 Highway 238, Applegate • [barbiesblingshack.com](http://barbiesblingshack.com) • [facebook.com/barbiesblingshack](https://www.facebook.com/barbiesblingshack) • [medford.craigslislist.org/clo/d/barbies-bling-shack/6634757663.html](https://www.medford.craigslislist.org/clo/d/barbies-bling-shack/6634757663.html).

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**Salon 238.** Ready to try a new do? Salon 238's owner and stylist, Sandy Reynolds, is offering half-price haircuts to new customers every Thursday in September. Located in the Sunshine Plaza in the heart of Ruch, the full-service salon is now open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 9 am - 3 pm. Call 541-899-7660 for an appointment. Find Salon 238 on Facebook and at 7390 Highway 238, Ruch.

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**Vinfarm.** Wooldridge Creek Winery has opened a new Grants Pass tasting room focused on wine flights and cheese and charcuterie made by the Wooldridge team. Open daily from 11 am - 6 pm. 111 SE G Street, Suite A, Grants Pass • 541-226-2664 • [facebook.com/vinfarmgp](https://www.facebook.com/vinfarmgp).

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**Whistling Duck Farm Store** owners, Vince and Mary Alionis, are ready to launch their new e-newsletter, which will feature stories from the farm and information about food and farming. Sign up to receive the farm newsletter at [whistlingduckfarm.com](http://whistlingduckfarm.com). Stop by the farm store and check out the great variety of offerings, from fresh produce to cookie dough to curly kraut from the Farmstead Fermentaria and much more. Open Monday - Friday, 10 am - 7 pm, and Saturday - Sunday, 11 am - 6 pm. Winter hours begin November 15. 12800 Williams Highway, Provolt • 541-761-6772.

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Email [gater@applegater.org](mailto:gater@applegater.org).

mark your calendars...

Every Monday - Game Night 6PM  
1st & 3rd Wed. - Open Mic Night 6PM  
Every Sunday - Rib Night 5PM

Every Thursday Night - Block Party  
1st Thursday - Humbug Creek Road  
2nd Thursday - Thompson Creek, Brown Rd  
3rd Thursday - N. Applegate & Williams  
4th Thursday - Hwy 238 & Ruch  
5th Thursday - Everyone!

(541) 846-1666  
OPEN Wed-Sun 12-9PM

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We now have wood-fired pizza & paninis for lunch too!