

## **Napa County 2000**

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The harvest that wouldn't end finally did. After weeks of wrangling between winemakers wanting extra hang time and growers who were ready to pick, heavy rains at the end of October brought the 2000 harvest to a close. Crop levels were up throughout most of Napa County, although some vineyards suffered from poor fruit set and losses due to sunburn.

Consistent rainfall through February and early March fully charged the soils with water as the season began. The weather turned sunny and warm for the remainder of March and through April. Soils drained quickly and there was little frost. This allowed for uniform budbreak and good early development of vines throughout the valley. Bloom began in May, which started out with some unsettled weather – rain, cool temperatures and high winds at times. Fruit set in some Merlot vineyards suffered as a result. The weather warmed towards the end of the month. Most vineyards had good fruit set and crop levels appeared high.

A five-day heat spell arrived in early June with temperatures as high as 113° F. Many vineyards suffered considerable sunburn. In a few cases, a majority of the crop was lost. The remainder of the summer was uneventful with excellent condition for fruit development and ripening.

The harvest started slowly in late August and proceeded at a steady pace through most of September. The large crop raised concerns about available tank space, but the even pace of harvest avoided this winery capacity issue. Hot weather towards the end of September brought many vineyards to full ripeness.

At the end of September, however, harvest essentially slowed to a halt. The weather cooled somewhat, but a significant change had occurred in the vines. Sugar accumulation essentially stopped. Many blocks saw little if any change in sugar content from the end of September to the end of October. October became a waiting game to see if sugars would go up or flavors would improve before the fruit degraded. Rain at the end of the month led to a flurry of activity in order to harvest any unpicked blocks. A cold snap lasting several days arrived in early November. Leaves throughout the valley were frosted and by the middle of the month, vineyards had all turned brown.

Pierce's disease was not as severe in 2000 as it has been in recent years. However, there is extreme concern about the threat posed by the glassy-winged sharpshooter. The local wine industry has supported strong measures put in place by our Agricultural Commissioner to try to prevent its introduction into the county. To date, Napa County remains uninfested.