

Vineyard Views

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April 28, 2008

We cannot express enough grief over the loss of Ed Weber. As most of you know, Ed passed away unexpectedly on December 31, 2007. Ed was the Viticulture Farm Advisor for Napa County University of California Cooperative Extension. There is a void that we should never try to fill. Like many of you, I knew Ed and for many years counted him as my friend. Emotions make it hard to say much but I can truly say that I miss him.

I am Mike Anderson and I have been asked to be Program Representative for the viticulture program in Napa County. I am honored to play any role possible to assist the grape growers of Napa County.

Who is that guy and what is he doing here? Good question.

First, I will try to describe what my role is and a little of what is happening with regards to the Viticulture Farm Advisor position in Napa County.

Hiring a new Viticulture Advisor in Napa County is the number one priority position request in the region. What that means is that the University of California Cooperative Extension regional office understands the importance of this position and will do everything they can to have the job filled. In large part, this is a testament to the respect the University has for you and your effort in making it clear to the University how important the position is to you. My presence is another example of the University's commitment to continued support of the Napa Valley grape growing community.

Currently, all of us are working through challenging budget times and when this position will actually be filled is unclear. I have been assured that the University will continue to support my position until the Viticulture Advisor position is filled, and to be honest, I am thrilled and excited.

My title is Viticulture Program Representative. I will be in Napa County several days a week and available any day you would like to contact me. **"I am from the University and I am here to help."** There will be a period of time when I am finding my way and learning how to be the most effective. Napa Valley is familiar territory to me and a lot of you already know me so I should get up to speed rather quickly. My goal is to create as complete of a program as possible with the resources I have. What that means to me is that I will do everything I can to provide support in your vineyards, keep you well informed and conduct research. My hope is that we will support each other in our common goal of seeing the finest grapes grown in Napa County. Interaction is vital to my success and I look forward to working with all of you. Although I am somewhat limited by time, I hope you will know that I'm here and that you will miss me when I leave the position.

Who am I?

Viticulture is my profession and avocation. I grew up working with my family's grape nursery. Many of you knew the nursery, Yolo Hills, my uncle Ernest Peninou and me during that time. Being in vineyards has always been a joy and pruning on an unseasonably warm spring day is one of my favorite activities. My experiences with nursery and vineyards, and affection for growing grapes led me to pursue a career in viticulture.

My aim as a UC Davis student was to grow grapes for a living but I became hooked on research and discovery. I graduated from UC Davis in 1984 and have been a researcher in the UC Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology ever since. The focus of my research has been varied and wide ranging including vine water relations, mineral nutrition and clonal, varietal and rootstock evaluation. As a researcher, I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you. Some of you have been research cooperators, some of you have listened to my talks at ASEV and RAVE meetings, and with some of you I have stood confused in the vineyard. I am looking forward to working with all of you – maybe we can learn a thing or two together.

Currently, I have several topics of interest. At the top of the list is plant material. I guess it goes back to my nursery upbringing, but I think that the quality of plant material is the foundation for the whole vineyard and it ought to be the best possible. I am a strong advocate for clean virus free planting material. The need for clean material is highlighted by mealy bug and leafroll spread in Napa County. Many folks are seeking to control mealy bugs below the level we might consider an economic threshold because of their ability to vector leafroll plant to plant and vineyard to vineyard. I think we need to take a look at how clean our planting material is and how planting virus infected material impacts the entire community.

Vineyard Views Newsletter Sign up and Format

Ed chose to stop sending hardcopy newsletters. My experience is that sometimes email newsletters find their way to the trash bin before careful reading and that hard copies get more attention. With that in mind, I am sending this newsletter as a real piece of paper – very retro. In the future, I can send newsletters either by email or hard copy. Your choice. We are also doing a mailing list house cleaning; in fact we are starting all over again. You will need to return the signup sheet accompanying this newsletter to continue receiving newsletters. Please sign up by mailing or faxing in your information. Hey it is free; what can you lose?

Napa Valley Vineyard Technical Group

The May meeting is on the 7th and I will be giving the talk. I will talk about my experiences in viticultural research, present data and some of my ideas for future projects. If you are a member please come. If you are not a member, I encourage you to become one and attend the meeting.

That is enough for now. I sign off looking forward to meeting you all.

Mike Anderson

The View From Below the Vine...

John Roncoroni, UCCE Napa Weed Science Farm Advisor

Soon after I arrived last year, I wrote my first article for this newsletter with a warning of herbicide resistant weeds. If they were not already in vineyards, I reasoned, they would be soon. The weeds most closely associated with herbicide resistance in California, Rigid Ryegrass (*Lolium rigidum* Gaudin) in the Sacramento Valley and Horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*) in the Southern San Joaquin, are still relatively minor weeds in most of the North Coast Region. The evolution of these weeds can be traced to over reliance on a small number of herbicides. Because of this I continue to discourage the use of a single weed control method or single herbicide, but I have realized that there are factors other than herbicide resistance that are contributing to less than satisfactory weed control in many vineyards.

I have observed that application timing, rate and coverage are more important than herbicide resistance in reduced herbicide efficacy at this point in time. A recent trend in vineyard herbicide use has been to go to a 'Roundup only' program consisting of a single application just prior to bud break and sometimes a second application during the growing season. The second application is often a spot spray with a backpack or spray gun. This tactic has been successful in the control of many annual weeds but less successful with perennials and some harder to control annuals: Tall Annual Willowherb (*Epilobium brachycarpum*); Fillaree (*Erodium spp.*); Sharppoint Fluvellin (*Kickxia elatine*); and Little Mallow or Cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*). Many of these hard to control annuals germinate several times during the year or over a long period of time making post-emergent control difficult.

Application timing is critical for both pre- and post-emergent herbicides. Pre-emergent herbicides must be applied before weeds germinate and in most cases followed within a month or less by a substantial rain event (>1/2 inch). Many growers wait until the rainy season begins, increasing the odds of this rain event. By delaying the application of pre-emergent herbicides many weeds will germinate and a post-emergent or 'burn down' herbicide must be added to control these weeds. Annual weeds are best controlled when small so post-emergent herbicides are often applied late enough to control as many weeds as possible, but early enough to still be effective. Factors that contribute to less than desirable control such as waxy leaves, woody stems and a large tap root all increase with the age of the weed.

Applying the herbicide at the full label rate and application number will usually control most or all of the weeds on the label. Herbicide applications are often made at less than the full label rates. Herbicide cost, application fuel cost, or a desire to reduce pesticide inputs are all valid reasons to use less than the allowable maximums. But if you choose to reduce the rate or number of applications in your vineyard, it is critical that you properly identify the weeds and know their biology (annual, perennial, and critical growth period). If you have had several years of good control and have the weeds 'under control' a slight rate reduction may be acceptable. On the other hand, if you continue to have the same weed problems year after year then you should consider increasing the rate, increasing the number of applications, using an alternative herbicide, or choosing a different method of control.

Application timing and herbicide rate should not be considered as independent factors. For post-emergent herbicide applications later in season, a higher rate may be needed to get acceptable control. For pre-emergent herbicides the duration of control needed will often dictate the rate. Applications made early in the season, in many cases, will need to be at a higher rate than those later in the season

The third factor to consider is coverage. The amount of water used in the application of herbicides can be a factor in efficacy. Many growers use a 20-30 gallon per acre application rate and this appears to be effective in most situations. I recently began a trial to explore if post-emergent herbicide efficacy on hard to control weeds is influenced by spray volume. I will report the findings in the future.

Coverage can have another, and in some cases, a much more important meaning. How much are the grape leaves that are left on the ground at the end of the season affecting the amount of herbicide that hits its target? Willowherb and Fillaree especially appear to 'hide' under the leaves escaping control of both pre- and post-emergent materials.

Preliminary data from a grower applied field trial shows that the amount of leaves present can dramatically influence the success of herbicide applications. This is nothing new to many growers who wait until the leaves have blown away before applying herbicides. Several factors including total rainfall, and cover crop height and density may keep the leaves in place well into the winter. Several growers in the Central Valley are using blowers to remove the leaves mechanically. Equipment that sweeps debris from under the vine after pruning may also remove leaves. The tradeoff between added operations and increased weed control will have to be considered. If you would like to see the results from this first year's work in person, I will be having a short field meeting to present my finding and show the field trial.

Weed Control Field Meeting

Thursday, May 8, 2008

9:00 am – 10:00 am

Location:

0.25 miles west at intersection of Conn Creek Road and Skellenger Road

Field Trials: Effect of timing of pre- and post-emergent herbicides on the control of Tall Annual Willowherb, and other weeds. Preliminary results on effect of leaf litter on herbicide efficacy.



