

OCPVA Newsletter February 15th 2024



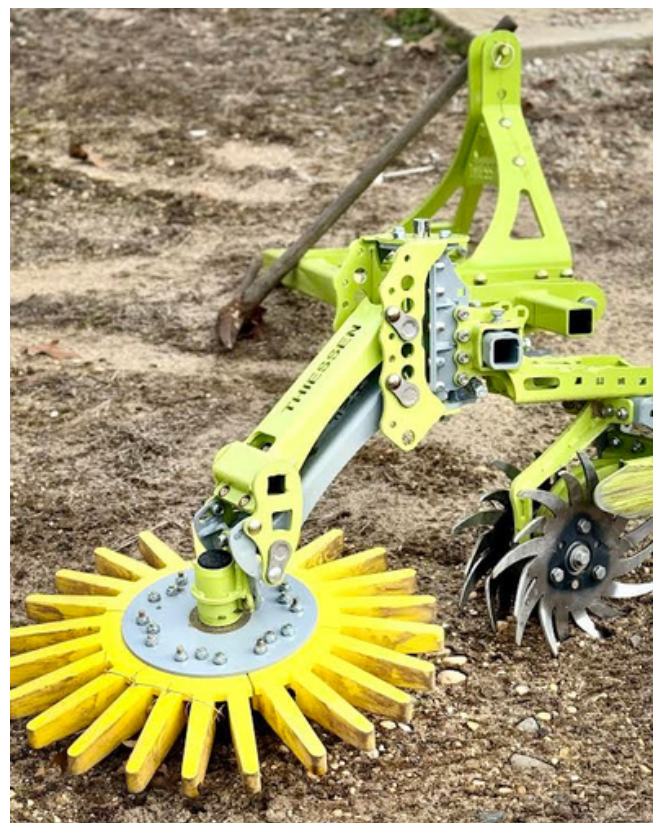
At The Meeting

If you did not make the recent OCPVA meeting at Autumn Lake you missed a good one. Once the business was through, a timely discussion on pruning ensued. It always amazes me how many different takes there are on this seemingly straight-forward chore.

This was followed by a tasting of several top local Chardonnay offerings from Auburn Road, William Heritage, Autumn Lake, Cedar Rose and Blue Cork. All had different attributes and they were stunningly varied. An in-depth conversation broke out and all learned and grew from it.

New Supplier

We had a new associate member at the meeting and he showed all an attachment for weeding in-row. It attaches to a front or rear three-point, or can be mounted amidship on the side. A video was available so all could visualize. It is sold by Allonardo Enterprises in Vineland, NJ. Talk to Mark Allonardo - mark@allonardoenterprises.com





San Marco and Trentina Orders

Double A Nursery reached out to us for more prunings to make more vines. One order of San Marco alone is 3,200 vines. The brush was gathered and piled high on Jim's pickup and is now safely at the nursery.

Coeur d'Est Wine Trail News

The new brochure for this was previewed at the meeting. With a few more edits, it will be ready for prime time. We are meeting with a company who prints and distributes brochures at various locations throughout our area.



If you are planning to produce a Coeur d'Est blend in the coming months, you should let Kelly know so we can get you in the system and paperwork completed. Currently there are 12 producers of Coeur d'Est listed.

New Grant Ideas

The idea is to identify, describe, and target marketplaces that are especially receptive to the types of wines that are better suited for production in the outer Coastal plain. This would mean identifying markets that prefer more obscure, eclectic, and novel wine varieties and styles of wine making. The next step is to engage with the identified markets and promote the unique products of the OCP.





Mask Fitting

As you may know, there is a requirement now for being fit for a mask to be used by pesticide handlers. It begins with a doctor's note saying you are healthy enough to wear a mask then goes a step further saying you must be fitted for a mask by an approved person. Sooner or later someone from the state will be checking so the time to act is now. Please send a note to mhernandez@renmarble.com if you have any interest. If we can get enough interest, we'll put a group training and fitting session together.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

The Eastern Wine Expo will be held in Syracuse, NY on March 12 to March 14. Excellent learning opportunities abound here. This is a great chance to meet new suppliers from our industry.



The Grape Expectations will be a one-day seminar on timely viticultural and enological topics. It will be held on Wednesday March 6 at the Forsgate Country Club in Monroe Twp which is just north of Cranbury, NJ.



Membership Dues

It is that time of year again.
Please submit at your earliest convenience.

The board would like to put together a small committee to collaborate on ways to use upcoming grants. It is not a huge commitment of time. It would be a few committee meetings per year and reporting on progress at the quarterly membership meeting. Please consider being a part of the solution and helping to move this wonderful organization to the next level! Interested members should send Kelly McGuire a note. kellyocpva@gmail.com

It's Ok to Skip a Step

I remember during the winter of 2021-2022, I worked so hard to prepare for the coming growing season. It would be the first season that I would be the vineyard manager as my long-time friend and employee slipped off into retirement. I studied his spray program and asked a lot of questions. I did my soil samples early so I could get a jump on any required amendments. I helped prune for the first time. I had two seasoned vineyard hands to help. I felt very prepared going into April.

Things rarely go as planned and this season would be no exception. Sometime around mid-May, one of the farm hands had a family illness and could not report for duty. It would end up to be an extended absence. As you know, this is smack in the middle of a very busy time. We happened to be focused on shoot thinning at the time and now down 50% workforce, it immediately started to get away from us. Soon I found myself spending more time in the vineyard. Still getting behind, Donna would join me after dinners to work the vines. It was sun up to sun down and still not enough. We were no match for the advancing vineyard growth.

A good friend told me, "It is ok to skip a step in the vineyard. Take care of the most important problem and catch up on the other stuff later." By this time, we should have been through shoot thinning, shoot positioning and early cluster thinning. None was complete and now the canopy was showing signs of needing a hedging not to mention a good amount of leaf pulling. I jumped ahead to leaf pulling while the help stayed on his track. The vineyard was a mess in various stages of completion and disarray.

It was four weeks of hell when we regained the missing worker. We struggled for months to catch up but slowly and steadily we did just that. The clusters were thinned out late, some shoots did not get positioned and a hedging session was missed. It was late July when it started to feel like a normal vintage. But then again, what really is a 'normal' vintage around here!?

Harvest came early after a dry, warm August and we never missed a beat. Some of the earlier varieties were the ripest and most pristine grapes we've ever experienced. Subsequent variety harvests were equally impressive. The 2022 harvest turned out to be one to the books even with all the trials and miscues we experienced early in the season.

Don't stop working even if it looks hopeless. You never know how close you are to your goals. It's ok to skip a step during a crisis. Just put out the biggest fire then go look for the next biggest fire!