

John's Vineyard

Towards the 2005 vintage

Follow progress in this monthly [Newsletter](#)

The 2nd spray of the season was administered on June 19th followed by continued building of the trellis to contain rampant growth of shoots. The weather was largely cool and damp (daily max. temps 18 – 21C) till July 8th since when daily maxima have been in the upper 20sC with much sunshine. Flowers appeared during the last week in June.

Following advice from other small vineyards in cool climates (thanks to Google) and to avoid last year's problems of mildew infection a first round of summer pruning to improve air circulation and sunshine penetration was completed on the 6th and 7th July.



The first task was to identify possible canes close to the trunk, one on each side if possible, for next year's growth with 1 or 2 reserves in case of mishap (this was not always possible because of careless pruning last year). Suitable shoots were shortened to about 6 leaf clusters and tied firmly in place. Next, barren shoots were removed save the occasional one to help sustain

growth of the plant as a whole. Next, shoots with flowers were clipped leaving 6 groups of leaves above the flowers. In some cases this meant removing 2 to 3 feet or more of shoot leading to an accumulation of debris (see picture below). Surplus leaves shading flowers from the sun were thinned. None of this was done last year contributing to the mildew disaster.

Finally, and most difficult, was the task of tying up the remaining shoots. So far this season I have confined myself to keeping all shoots within a narrow corridor of 18 – 24 inches, 9 - 12 inches either side of the main alignment of the rows. This had been successful in preventing parallel rows of vines from fraternising with each other but many shoots had grown horizontally within the corridor causing considerably congestion and interweaving close to where flowers were blooming. The ensuing density was obstructing light and air circulation encouraging possible mildew. Disentangling was time-consuming. Eventually all fruit-bearing shoots were tied vertically giving maximum light and space for the fruit (see above). This is an important lesson for next season when planning the trellis.

About a third to a half of the foliage was removed, and the remaining foliage made more accessible. The vines received their third anti-mildew spray of the season on July 7th.

During the warm spell (8 – 18 July) rampant growth continued and further strengthening of the trellis and fine pruning was necessary. However, the leaves and flowers are looking healthy, responding to warmth and sunshine. By July 11th, flowers were beginning to give way to fruit. So far so good. A fourth light spraying is scheduled for 21st July the day before I travel overseas for 2 weeks. I wonder what I will find on my return?

They told him that it couldn't be done

Australian and New Zealand friends scoffed at the idea that the Poms could grow vines for wine, ignoring the 100 or so vineyards across the UK. So as a complete novice in 2000 I took up the challenge - in my small back garden in Somerset. There were some favourable factors:

- * limestone based soil;
- * a 30 foot high south-facing white stone wall, providing shelter from north winds and a sun-trap;
- * alleged global warming;
- * Chardonnay flourishes in Champagne, northern France.

Twenty two tiny vines (Chardonnay - Colmar 57 - S04 grafted on American rootstock) were planted in April 2000. After 4 trial and error growths, 2005 is the year for the big test. Follow progress in this Monthly Newsletter. See how I finish this traditional rhyme:-

*They told him that it couldn't be done,
And with heart he set right to it.
He tackled the job that couldn't be done,
And (could / couldn't) do it.*

John Stephenson

