

FALL



During the fall, there is a lot of activity in the vineyard. Traffic will increase with additional workers harvesting grapes and trucks picking up product and making deliveries.

Grape harvest in Iowa can begin as early as August and can run as late as October. For top quality grapes, harvesting at precisely the right moment is critical.

From October through December the vines are becoming dormant and the grape growers are planning their vineyard activities for the next year.

WINTER

Winter is the start of the pruning season! Pruning is very important because it sets the stage for future crops for both quality and quantity. In Iowa, pruning is most commonly done manually. A vineyard owner will spend the season taking care of every plant by hand. Pruning wraps up just in time for bud break and the entire cycle starts over again.

For more information regarding rules and regulations for pesticides, please contact the Pesticide Bureau at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship at 515.281.8591 or visit their web site at www.agriculture.state.ia.us.

You may also contact Mike White, Field Crop and Viticulture Specialist at Warren County Extension Office at 515.961.6237 or email at mlwhite@iastate.edu.

For additional “Living Near A Vineyard” brochures, email paul.ovrom@idals.state.ia.us. A copy of the brochure is also available at www.agriculture.state.ia.us, click on Grape and Wine Development Commission.



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Living Near A Vineyard

HELLO NEIGHBOR . . .

It is widely assumed that living in rural Iowa means you live near a field of corn or soybeans. It is common to see large equipment during spring and fall and most people are aware that care should be given when using certain pesticides near these fields. In general, most everyone knows what to expect.

*Now there's something new
dotting the Iowa landscape . . .
Vineyards!*

Like row crops, vineyards also use farm equipment and pesticides. We would like to take you on a written tour of what you might expect in a vineyard throughout our growing season. For a “real” tour, contact a local grape grower!



SPRING



Spring is the beginning of a new cycle. Grapevines, like other woody plants, break bud in the spring. If we get a cold night or two, we may have to protect the tender new growth from frost. Some methods we may use are: sprinkler systems or controlled, contained fires. These methods can create a micro-environment around the vines warm enough to save an entire crop.

When new vines are planted grow tubes are used to help them grow straight and also to protect plants from rabbits or other critters that might devour them. Deer can be especially damaging to young green plants. Tubes alone may not be enough protection, so some vineyard owners install deer fence around their vineyards.

Spring is also the time to begin to protect our crop from fungal diseases such as downy or powdery mildew. These are also common diseases on roses, lilacs, and many other garden plants.

These diseases are caused by humidity and moisture on the plants which creates a favorable environment for disease development.

Fungicide applications are essential to control these problems. Grape growers use a variety of chemicals and typically treat the plants when there is little wind. With many of these chemicals, it is very important to avoid the vineyard for some time after spraying. Each chemical has a different re-entry interval which means the time between spraying and when you can safely re-enter the vineyard.

Spring is also when weed control begins for everyone, not just for farmers. Some vineyard owners use glyphosate to kill weeds. This is the same herbicide you use on your lawn or in the field. It is used in small amounts and only directly beneath the trellis where the mowers can't reach. Wider, more accessible areas between rows will be mowed.

If applied properly around the vines, glyphosate is not harmful to the plant. Although, there are some commonly used herbicides that are harmful. The most hazardous chemicals or products are those that contain 2-4-D and dicamba, which is in Banvel®. Even yard and garden herbicides like Weed-Be-Gone® can also be hazardous. Using these herbicides on a windy day, even miles away from a vineyard, or on a warm day, can volatilize and drift which can damage or destroy an entire crop and possibly even kill the plants. It can take years to replace and grow the vines until they will produce fruit again.

SUMMER

As we roll into summer, work in the vineyard gets busy. This is the time of year when we manage or shape the foliage. This is done to expose the grapes to just the right amount of sunlight. This makes them more flavorful and allows for better air circulation and less disease.



In late summer when the grapes begin to ripen the birds are attracted to the dark colored fruit. That is when bird control is vital.

We use a variety of methods to try to keep birds from destroying our vineyards. Some of these include noise makers like propane cannons and recorded distress calls, decoy owls, and sometimes netting will be stretched over the vines to protect the still ripening grapes.

As the summer winds down, grape harvest is just around the corner.