

MISTY VALLEY

NURSERY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2005



If they couldn't achieve a high level of drainage, they knew they were wasting their time planting vines.

These days there are technicians with GPS and laser guided machines to do the hard yakka. There's even the odd 'old timer' around who will be able to tell you where the troublesome spots are. Seek them out, there is no substitute for experience.

Soil preparation.

Firstly, remove as much of the current weed growth as possible. My preference is to spray off the paddock and give a rough cultivation in late summer. This removes existing weed growth, and encourages germination of residual weed seeds. The method and depth of cultivation will depend on soil type, available machinery and local practices.

There are general rules, regardless of where your vineyard is located:

a) Do not cultivate when the soils are excessively wet or dry. Almost all soils will suffer from severe structural damage if cultivated when too wet.

Some soils will be subject to wind and/or rain erosion if cultivated when too dry.

b) Observe the practices of local farmers, particularly those who have had many generations of arable farming experience in your area, and know and understand the local conditions.

c) After the initial germination and before weeds become too large, and especially before they set seed, the paddocks can be cultivated again. Depending on the site and the local soil type, a couple of cultivations prior to planting is normally sufficient.

The aim is to achieve a fine tilth and a good cultivation depth of at least 300mm. These two factors are vitally important for vine establishment.

For areas with stony or gravelly soils, seed bed tilth is impossible. The most important factor is planting depth, particularly as these soils tend to be the most arid. The deeper the vine is planted, the more opportunity it has to access the available soil moisture. Where deep cultivation is not practical, we recommend ripping along the planting line. This shatters the sub surface soils, and allows good early development of deep moisture seeking roots.

I also favour deep ripping for heavy clay soils in the Autumn prior to planting when the sub surface is dry. By setting the ripper at the desired depth you can control the future rooting depth of your vineyard and exercise some control over vigour.

Vines are very poor competitors with weeds, so it is essential that your new vineyard is planted in the complete absence of weeds.

Patchy growth or outright failure in the first year can almost always be linked to poor site preparation, the presence of weeds, excess wind, or the failure of the vines to find sufficient water.

For all of these problems the remedy must be applied prior to planting. I encourage you to think it all through before any of them become a problem.

The Take Home Message.

- 1. Get your soil checked by a qualified nutritionist*
- 2. Fix nutrition problems before planting*
- 3. Attend to wet spots before planting*
- 4. Achieve a fine soil tilth with adequate cultivation depth.*

Rex.

**Next month –
Tips on Planting**



**MISTY
VALLEY
NURSERY**

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