

Fashion

In the last mailer I talked about the latest export trends.

The rehabilitation of SO4 rootstock, particularly with Sauvignon blanc growers in Marlborough appears to be the latest fashion to hit our industry.

When people call and request a particular rootstock that seems a bit out of place, I make a point of asking, "Why that choice?"

The three consistent reasons I've had for requiring SO4 is that:

- "It wins all the Gold medals"
- "It has better nutritional status, particularly its' better uptake of Potassium"
- "It has good vigor and we need vigor down here"

Alas, our memories are too short and we are prone to look at single factors in isolation. We seem to have forgotten the reasons why we started to veer away from this rootstock a little more than 10 years ago.

SO4 is relatively vigorous, it is an excellent rootstock for the right locations. It does take up potassium quite well and quite a few gold medals have come its' way. But lets look at things in perspective.

The graph below from the American Journal of Enology & Viticulture (Vol 56 #2) illustrates relative uptake of Potassium amongst various rootstocks. If we were choosing rootstocks

for Potassium uptake we would go for 3309 or Schwarzmann.

Those of us who can remember the horrid '95 Vintage in the Wairau Valley, will recall that the SO4 blocks were the first to fall over. The first to split, the first to rot and the rot set in at 17 Brix.

Now this is only one mans' thoughts and I'm happy to be shot down in flames, but I do have the inkling of an idea why SO4 has performed so well in the last couple of years.

We have had a couple of years (05 and 06 in particular) when it has been quite dry post veraison. The movement of nutrients post veraison is critical for maturity and wine quality. We know from Professor Denis Duborduis that adequate supply of Nitrogen is a critical factor for Sauvignon blanc wine quality, particularly aroma profile.



The more vigorous rootstocks are better at acquiring nutrients under dry conditions. This is a statement of fact.

Could it simply be that after a couple of seasons of dry conditions post veraison, we are seeing vigorous rootstocks perform better, because they are good at acquiring nutrients, particularly Nitrogen, under dry conditions.

SO4 is an excellent rootstock for drier conditions such as the upper Brancott, the Awatere, Waihopai and the dry valleys south of the Awatere. I have strong reservations about its' use on the Wairau Valley where sub-soil water sits within 5m of the surface, and remember a stock that can take up

Nitrogen under dry conditions is especially good at taking it up under wet conditions. High Nitrogen levels are consistent with increased susceptibility to Botrytis

Lets keep vintage '95 in the back of our minds. We need to change gradually and for the right reasons, not on a whim and fancy.

Spare Vines for Spring Planting.

Clone
Cabernet franc 214
Cabernet franc 326
Cabernet franc 327
Cabernet franc 05102
Cab Sauvignon 338
Cab Sauvignon LC 10
Cab Sauvignon KWV 15
Chardonnay c15
Chardonnay Mendoza
Chardonnay B95
Gewurztraminer GM11
Gewurztraminer col 456
Gewurztraminer col 457
Gewurztraminer 1106
Gewurztraminer col 1148
Malbec BDX 595
Malbec UCD6
Merlot 181
Merlot 347
Merlot UCD8
Merlot UCD3
Pinot gris GM2/15
Pinot gris 2-16
Pinot noir UCD 4
Pinot noir UCD 5
Pinot noir UCD 6
Pinot noir 114
Pinot noir 115
Pinot noir 667
Riesling 110
Riesling GM198/19
Riesling GM239
Riesling GM239-10
Sangiovese 12T
Syrah 174
Syrah 470
Syrah Chave
Syrah Grippat A PCR
Syrah Grippat B PCR
Syrah Hermitage / ms
Viognier clone UCD1
Viognier clone 642
Viognier HTK Koorlong

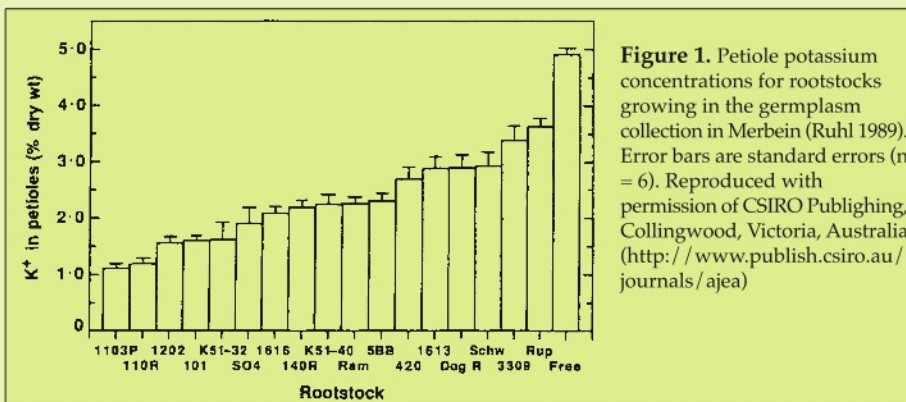


Figure 1. Petiole potassium concentrations for rootstocks growing in the germplasm collection in Merbein (Ruhl 1989). Error bars are standard errors (n = 6). Reproduced with permission of CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia (<http://www.publish.csiro.au/journals/ajea>)



MISTY
VALLEY
NURSERY

Call Rex Sunde or Gillian Howard to discuss your requirements

Ph 09 838 7979 Fax 09 838 7563

or email vitis@clear.net.nz

Freephone 0800 444 614