



REX'S PRACTICAL TIPS #8 Spring 2005

Spring Cleaning

Beating the weeds

Q: What is a weed?

A: A Miracle in the wrong place!

Many growers come back from a brief rest over Christmas or the New Year to attend to trimming, leaf plucking and tucking. On top of these jobs they are often dismayed to find a carpet of relatively difficult to control weeds that had not been a problem prior to departure.



Once the dry weather kicks in in the New Year, weeds like the Mallows, Clovers and Nightshade become increasingly difficult to control due to the waxy coating over their leaves, giving natural resistance to herbicide uptake.

The trick is to get them when they are young.

There are many very effective herbicides on the market but in my book there are none better than Glyphosate and Amitrole.

When these two chemicals are combined as a late winter/early spring clean up application, they are highly effective at completely removing the difficult weeds from the under vine area.

The aim is to get these weeds soon after germination, when the young foliage is immature and they have not developed natural protection from herbicides.

Learn to recognize the germination time of the critical weed species and try to get a herbicide application on when the plants are still very young and actively growing.

There's several very good reasons for not losing the battle against weeds. The immediate and obvious one is that vines are very weak competitors as most of the rootstocks we use have very shallow root systems. Most weeds are capable of

extending their roots well into the watering and feeding zone of young vines in particular.

The second and not so obvious reason becomes clear when you consider the old pastoral expression,

"One years seeds is ten years weeds."

This may seem a bit of an exaggeration but it is close enough to the truth. Over the course of your vineyard's life, you can significantly reduce the amount of herbicide you apply by ensuring that they are applied in a manner that prevents weeds from going to seed.

A few notes about the Glyphosate / Amitrole combination.

I have yet to find a weed species resistant to this combination when applied early in the growing season.

Ideally application should be made prior to bud burst at 100ml/100L of each when sprayed to wet with conventional hydraulic application.

It works best on actively growing weeds under cool conditions.

Label warnings state that Amitrole should not be applied to vines under two years of age. This is particularly the case on light sandy or gravelly ground with low organic matter. Vines are relatively resistant to Amitrole so with care, experience and heavier soils, this product can be used in younger vineyards.

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