

## Lindsay's Vineyard Chronicles

What's been going on in the vineyard this week?

Thursday June 15

We've been in a holding pattern in the vines this week with frequent showers, mist, and cool foggy mornings. At this point in the season, I am keeping a constant eye on the flower clusters to see if I can spot some of the first caps falling. I haven't seen any yet – but keeping up with the Instagram accounts from other New England grape growers, I have a feeling that we'll be seeing bloom soon. Our clusters continue to extend, and hopefully we'll be seeing those flowers soon.

In the liminal period before bloom, we continue our work in the North and Middle blocks knocking down the weeds and capturing suckers. The hard freeze in May killed many of our primary shoots (green, full of life!) but freeze can also severely impact the functioning of our vine wood (trunks, canes, and cordons).

When coming out of dormancy, the vine wood wakes up long before any visible growth starts happening. During winter, the vine conserves its starchy sap in the trunk wood and roots, until soil temperatures increase again. When breaking dormancy in the spring, sap starts flowing back to the canes and cordons through the vascular structure of the vine.

When a vine is dormant and sap is conserved in the trunk and root system of the plant, a freeze like we had in May would do very little damage to the vine wood itself. But, when sap is flowing and there is a hard freeze, the crystallization of water can break the vascular channels within the wood, interrupting sap flow permanently.



*Figure 1: sap flowing as dormancy breaks in Spring*

We won't know the extent of wood damage from this freeze event until we get to pruning in the winter, but one thing we can do right now is try to hold on to some suckers – the new green shoot growth arising either from the ground or very low on the trunk. These shoots can be trained up into new trunk structures. This natural habit of the vine is an important resource for growers working in cold climates, where freeze damage to trunk wood unfortunately can be a regular problem.

Tying up suckers goes hand-in-hand with weeding, so we're spending a lot of time on the ground looking at the base of the vines right now. Here in Maine, our soils tend to have high nutrient content, so vines have ready access to all the minerals they need to support their vigor. This can often result in vines putting out a lot of suckers, and we need to select just one or two to keep the growth of the vine in balance.



*Figure 2: Frontenac Gris vine pre and post-suckering*

The other important part of the process is securing the selected shoots up to the bamboo posts at each vine. As they grow, these new shoots can easily bend and break in the wind and under their own weight, so we make sure to rein in the ones we want to use for cane and trunk renewal. Later in the summer, these shoots will start to lignify (turn brown and get harder), and they'll be incorporated into our pruned vine structure in the winter.