

Lindsay's Vineyard Chronicles

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

Thursday July 20

It's been wonderful to feel a break in the rain and some true summer warmth the last week, and the vines are responding in great form. The fruit set that we saw the week of the Fourth has moved along steadily, and in some varieties we've blown past 'pea stage' and we're nearing bunch closure – the final berry growth phase before veraison (ripening) begins.

In many ways, it still feels like the season has yet to kick in, but walking around the vineyard today I was reminded that, for all our preparation and effort, the window for growing our grapes is incredibly brief.



Figure 1: Brianna bunch closure (left), Itasca nearing closure (right)

At this stage in the season, the vine vigor is reaching its peak for the year, and it's important to wrangle the shoots in a way that provides the best exposure in the fruit zone. The tactic that I use is called 'combing', and combines elements of shoot thinning, lateral thinning and leaf pulling to open the canopy along the fruiting wire.

We train all our vines along a high wire so we can let gravity do most of the hard work here, but vigorous shoots can trail along the wire and congest the fruit zone for neighboring vines, so we still need to get our arms in the canopy and guide the growth. It's a long process, and there's a lot of frustrating detangling and snapping tendrils, but it is satisfying to see our clusters hanging with lots of airflow afterwards.



Figure 2: Itasca, looking a mess



Figure 3: Itasca, freshly combed