

Root pruning and covercrops combine to control vigour

In its regular viticulture column, the AWRI offers the latest advice on how to keep Chardonnay growth down, and identify the difference between clones, mass-selection and late-season hedging.

There appears to be more interest in mass-selected clones than imported clones in my region because they are claimed to produce better wine. What is your opinion?

It is incorrect to describe these mass selections as clones. A clone, by definition, must be able to be traced back to a single source vine, i.e., every single vine of Chardonnay I10V1 can be traced back to a single source vine in California. Mass selections are most often the result of an initial collection of cuttings from one or more vines in a vineyard of good reputation; for example, the so-called 'Reynella clone' of Cabernet Sauvignon or the so-called 'Lovedale and Drayton clones' of Semillon.

The reputation of the original source vineyard, in these cases, may be entirely the result of a good site – the genetic status

of that vineyard may not be superior to another vineyard.

True clones are the result of a clonal selection program that has verified the genetic superiority of the clone during the evaluation process. Some will claim that they use local mass selections because they are better suited to local conditions than a clone originating from another region. However, there is no evidence to support this assumption.

Whether mass selections produce better wine than selected clones or unselected material is a matter of opinion. There appears to be no evidence that supports this proposition. In summary, the use of one or more 'true' clones for a given variety is likely to consistently result in better productivity and wine, and pose less

risk of harmful virus diseases, than the use of mass selections.

As my Shiraz vines have had a severe downy infection with defoliation and bunch damage, I am considering hedging the current shoots back to the basal one to three buds in the hope that they will reshoot and produce a crop later in the season. Will this work, since it is now early January?

I would not recommend this for several reasons. The latent buds at the base of the current shoots are now likely to be in a state of 'organic dormancy'. This means that it doesn't matter what you do to them, they will not burst. Had you done this in early December, the latent buds would have been in a state of 'conditional dormancy' and, thus, could have been forced to burst if the shoot tips, bunches



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