



Country Viniculture in the Heart of the Foothills

Trellis Wire

April 2025

www.SWGGA.com



President's Message

Board Departures. Looking for Volunteers!

Last month, I said "We Need You" and that holds true more than ever. We have been notified that two of our board members, Gerard Van Steyn and Susan Clarabut are stepping off the SWGGA board. Fortunately, they plan to remain involved,

even if at a different level.

Gerard has relocated to Truckee but has indicated that he still wants to stay connected, potentially helping with a future program. Thankfully, Susan will continue her very important work as our Scholarship coordinator. We very much appreciate both Susan and Gerard's contributions to SWGGA and are glad they're not leaving us completely!

We're beginning to pour through our survey responses and a few of you have indicated a desire to get more involved. Great! We need picnic volunteers and now, a board member or two! Please contact me or any other board member if you're interested, or curious about hearing more.

Spring Cheers! Diane.

Next Meetings

Thursday April 17,

Ponderosa Hall

What Next?

See Page 2

Field Trip

Thursday May 17, 5:00 p.m.

Tom Martella's Vineyard

Chicago Park

See Page 5

Summer Picnic

Saturday, June 21st

Sierra Starr Vineyard & Winery
in Grass Valley.

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Huge Award and Recognition To Local Wine Group

In a development nobody saw coming, Nevada County wine group, Sierra Wine & Grape Growers Association was signaled out for its exemplary efforts to promote viniculture in the region.

Leaked by a major wine magazine, the full page article will be available when the edition hits news stands this month. The award comes with a \$10,000 first place prize as well as an invitation the the Wine Tasting Gala and Awards Night later in the summer.

"I didn't know about this award, or that we were even in the running" a Board member was overheard saying to a colleague. "But wow, I always knew we were the best. It's our members that make us so great."

Social Hour begins at 6:30. Meeting begins at 7:00

April Meeting, Thursday, April 17th at Ponderosa Hall

What Should You Do Next With Your Wine?

In February's meeting Dave Elliott toured us through good winemaking practices in the cellar during the winter months. You know, things to do to improve your wine.

We have collected eight wines, some produced by novice winemakers, and some by veterans. See the list of wine. →

- 2024 Rosé
- 2024 Syrah Rosé
- 2024 Barbera
- 2024 Cabernet Franc
- 2023 Tempranillo
- 2024 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2023 Petite Sirah
- 2024 Petite Sirah

The question is: could they, should they do something to try to improve their wines? Maybe it's a blending solution, or maybe an oak, or acidity issue, or maybe even a fining question. Or maybe nothing? What's next?



Our expert panel of commercial winemakers
Mark Foster Guy Lauterbach Scott Siver

We all get to taste each wine. Then we get to hear what each of the pros might do with that wine. Leave it alone? Make a change? And what change? Does that match what you're tasting? Think of it as a way of calibrating your palate.



In Case You Missed It . . .
The March Meeting . . .

Jackson Starr of Sierra Starr Winery walked us through how to prune grape vines, while actually pruning grape vines. It was great. Really informative for a confusing topic.



Remembering Lloyd Tosse

It is with great sadness that we report that long time SWGGA member and seemingly perpetual Treasurer passed away recently. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Diane in her loss.

Another long time member and friend, Dan Carrick took the chance to reminisce.

“Actually Lloyd took over the role of Treasurer from me,” Dan recalled. “Lloyd joined SWGGA around 2004. Lloyd was a CPA with his own accounting business. It made sense that he be the treasurer. In 2005 he took that position from me.

He was also into his motor home. Elaine and I had a little camper trailer and every year for at least 10 or 12 years Diane and Lloyd and Elaine and I would drive down to Yosemite to attend wine dinners at the Ahwahnee Hotel. Those were fun times and the dinners were great.”



Dan Carrick at his Penn Valley vineyard



Diane & Lloyd Tosse at a Ahwahnee Hotel wine dinner

“At that time they were living off of Greenhorn Road. Lloyd had a small vineyard with about 60 Chardonnay vines. Frankly, it was always a challenge. Between the altitude and way too much shade and tree cover he struggled with getting the grapes ripe. Let’s just say the vines were not all that happy about the situation. He may have been a little bit better at enjoying wines than he ever was at making them. When they moved to their next house he gave up the vineyard and winemaking and took to raising chickens.

Lloyd was also active in numerous organizations throughout the area.

Lloyd had a big, outgoing personality. He was a gregarious guy, fun to know and always fun to be around. I will forever remember him fondly.”

Nevada Joint Union High School District Ranch Project



In 2021 Jim Phelan donated his 86 acre ranch, located in the south county, to the Nevada Joint Union High School District for “educational, recreational, conservation, and agricultural purposes”. It was a very generous gift.

The project falls under the auspices of the department of Career Technical Education (CTE). Luke Browning, a seventh generation county resident, is the High School CTE Director. Luke’s vision is to have as many different industry standard levels of ranching and agricultural activities as possible. Luke reached out to SWGGA for advice about putting in a vineyard.

Dave Elliott volunteered to be our representative on their Advisory Board. He is the perfect choice. He has done it and knows how to do it.

The 86-acre property includes NID Ag water, three ponds, an office, two barns and a caretaker house. They intend to build class rooms as well as a community center.



The Ranch



One Step At A Time

Everything starts somewhere. Here is the first step in the start of a very long project. The Vineyard Project.

Luke Browning and Dave Elliott standing on the site of the future vineyard. In March we went out to the ranch, walked around the property with Luke, got a chance to look at the land and figure what was going where. There was a perfect little hillside shelf, a slight slope away from the tree line, uphill from a creek. It’s pretty rocky terrain. Lots of big looking rocks. It’s going to take a big pice of equipment to get them out. Luke says he knows a guy. So there it was. A picture perfect little vineyard site. Maybe a third of an acre.

Club News

SWGGA Scholarship Update

This is the time of year when the Scholarship committee selects the 2025 award recipient. This year 10 candidates applied for our scholarship. In March the committee met to select this year's recipient. Congratulations. Except we are not allowed to announce our winner until the night of the awards presentation at the Vet's Hall. Still, congratulations.

There was one other change this year. We had some extra money in our Scholarship Fund because one of the previous recipients didn't collect their second year payment. Remember it is a \$2000 award paid over two years, so \$1000 each year.

The committee decided rather than keep the extra money in the account it would be better to disperse it; create a bigger award. So, for this year's winner it will be a total award of \$3,000 paid over two years.

Congratulations.



SWGGA Picnic Update

We know when. Saturday, June 21st, 5:00 p.m.

We know where. Sierra Starr Vineyard and Winery.

Mark your calendars. All other details to follow.

We're looking for **Volunteers** to help plan and arrange the site.

Thanks. AL afsarch@sbcglobal.net

Sierra Starr Vineyard Grass Valley



Field Trip Thursday May 15, 5:00 p.m. Martella Vineyard, Chicago Park.

The meeting in May is a Field Trip to The Martella Vineyard. The date is still the third Thursday of the month, but we will start this at 5:00 p.m. instead of our 6:30 Ponderosa starts.

We will all meet at Tom and Nancy Martella's vineyard and orchard property starting at 5:00 p.m. You'll find it tucked into a beautiful little corner of Chicago Park that will be bursting in the bloom of spring. The address for parking is 15936 Quail Ridge Court. Please contact Tom directly at 48vines@gmail.com if you have special parking needs.

Group Buy: Chardonnay

Dave Elliott wants to make Chardonnay this upcoming harvest. He wants to know if any of you winemakers out there would be interested in going in on a group buy? All the details would need to be sorted but before that, is anyone interested?

If you are, then contact Dave at djelliott@skydancesranch.com

**Here's the scoop on the Nevada County Fair.
Time to get your wines ready. Time to get them entered.**

WINE

WINE

Entry Forms Due By: Monday, July 14 by 4 pm

Drop off: Tuesday, July 22 from 8 am - 3 pm

Drop off entries: **ADMINISTRATION OFFICE**

Closed judging

Pick up: Tuesday, August 12 from 12 pm - 6 pm

Pick up entries: **NORTHERN MINES BUILDING**

RULES: Open to all counties.

Two entries per class per exhibitor.

- Exhibitor must bring two 750 ml. cork or screw cap finished bottles. One to be filled with the competition wine and one empty for display purposes only. All bottles must be labeled.
- Wine must be personally produced by the exhibitor. Grapes do not have to be grown by exhibitor.
- No display of business cards, signs or advertising is allowed.
- Professional winemakers may not enter. Other vineyard/ winery staff are allowed to participate provided the wine entered was not produced in a professional winery.

Division 200 - Red Wine

Classes

1. Cabernet Sauvignon
2. Syrah
3. Zinfandel
4. Any other Varietal Red - Please specify
5. Non-varietal red (less than 75% any one grape varietal) please specify percentages of all the grape varieties

Division 201 - White Wine

Classes

1. Chardonnay
2. Sauvignon Blanc
3. Any other Varietal White - Please Specify
4. Non-varietal white (less than 75% of any one grape varietal) Specify the percentages of all the grape varieties

Division 202 - Blush, Dessert & Sparkling Wine

Classes

1. Blush wine, specify
2. Dessert wine, specify approximate residual sugar
3. Sparkling Wine, specify
4. Non-grape fruit wine, specify

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Red Wine - Division 200

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White Wine - Division 201

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Blush, Dessert & Sparkling Wine - Division 202

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Certainly many of you will have already read this article by Mike Dunne, published just last week. It is worth revisiting. It offers a stark assessment of what's going on in the Foothills, especially Amador, and that is the successful part of the Foothills. Below are excerpts from his article.

A historic California wine region is in peril: 'Never seen it this bad'

By Mike Dunne. March 29, 2025

"All California wine regions are staggered by the industry's many current woes, which range from slumbering sales to restrictive tariffs, but they especially complicate prospects in the Sierra Foothills, where the trade is historic but has struggled to establish a standing as a fine-wine region.

David Ashcraft, founder of Vintroux Real Estate in Sonoma County, which

specializes in vineyards and wineries, has twice as many wine-related listings as usual for his 25 years of business. Of the 22 he currently lists, 15 are in the foothills, nine in Amador County alone, and he is not the only broker active in the area.

What's more, grape growers are seeing contracts with wineries dry up, leaving them with no outlets for their fruit, which in many instances was left on the vine after this past fall's harvest. Of last year's Amador County wine grape crop, "from what I've seen, 60% or so was unpicked," said Spencer Jones, president of the Amador Winegrowers Association, which has 62 farmer members. "For the 2025 vintage, no contracts are being signed right now."

It's pruning season, but many farmers are hesitant to prune, Jones said. "That's the major expense for the year, and they don't know if they will see a return. It's pretty scary."

The Sierra foothills stands apart from other California appellations in several respects, not all of them conducive to raising its profile as a region for fine wine. It is remote and isolated, not close to a major tourist destination. It is hot and arid. Water is scarce, and even in drought-free years yields are low. It staked its standing on Zinfandel, not one of the reputed "noble" European varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. No Robert Mondavi-level figure has emerged to bring marketing electricity to the region.

Members of the area's wine trade rarely have bridged the rivers between counties to work together to promote the region, aside from a moment in the 1980s when a small group of vintners persuaded federal officials that the Sierra foothills justified recognition as an American Viticultural Area, stretching 170 miles from Yuba County in the north to Mariposa County in the south.

The current churn, as growers and winemakers see it, has more to do with economics and a lack of heirs interested in continuing a family business than it does with the nature and the quality of wines originating in the region."



Board of Directors

Diane Houston
President
diane.houston
@managementtrust.com

Dave Elliott
Vice- President
djelliott
@skydancesranch.com

Lisa Whittet
Treasurer
lwhittet@sbcglobal.net

Al Schafer
Secretary &
Event Coordinator
afsarch@sbcglobal.net

Susan Clarabut
Scholarship Coordinator
sclarabut@gmail.com

Tom Martella
Outreach Coordinator
48vines@gmail.com

Gerard Van Steyn
Director At-Large
gerardvsl@gmail.com

Rod Byers
Program Coordinator
rodbyers
@pinehillwineworks.com

Web Master
Jim Garrett
jim@relateddatas.com

Trellis Wire Editor
Rod Byers
rodbyers
@pinehillwineworks.com

SWGGA SWAG

Check the website, www.swgga.org for product descriptions. Contact Susan Clarabut at sclarabut@gmail.com if you have questions, wish to check pricing, or, best of all, would like to make an order.

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Vineyard Sign | \$57 |
| Woman's Long Sleeve Shirt | \$35 |
| Men's Short Sleeve Shirt | \$35 |
| Cap | \$18 |
| Corkscrew | \$13 |
| Wine Glass | \$3 |



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