



Country Viniculture in the Heart of the Foothills

# Trellis Wire

September 2025

[www.SWGGA.com](http://www.SWGGA.com)

## Attention: Date Change.

**The September Meeting at Ponderosa Hall is**

**Thursday, September 11th. That is one week early.**

That is the 2nd Thursday of September. 6:15 Social Start Time. Meeting at 7:00.



### President's Message

2025 Vintage Off to a Stellar Start!

2025 has been an almost perfect grape growing season and it looks to also be an abundant vintage here at Red Paws Vineyard. Except for some minor heat damage from recent hot spells, all varietals look great. I harvested, Sauvignon Blanc August 29, the timing in line with historical averages; the yield 40% more than last year!

And now the dilemma - with all that juice, along with my commitment for the group Chardonnay and plan to make rose' – where is it all going to go? Not enough cold space or containers. Still working on that.

The first pick of Merlot came in just over a ton; a typical year, but there's still lots of fruit left. The clusters are big and gorgeous. I don't know if it's because of the regeneration project I've been doing the past three years or if it's just one of those great vintages?!

What are the rest of you seeing? I'm anxious to hear from other growers and winemakers - is 2025 looking as good out there as it is here? Cheers to 2025 Harvest! Diane

### Upcoming Meetings

Both the September Ponderosa Meeting and October Field Trip are the SECOND Thursday of each month.

**Thursday, September 11th,  
Ponderosa Hall.**

Are You Sure? A Wine Tasting. Sort Of.  
Plus A Book Swap Fund Raiser.

**Thursday, October 9th,  
Field Trip**

Frescas Vineyard, Chicago Park

**The upcoming Board of Directors election** will be in November. Historically SWGGA has had nine Board members. We currently have six. We need new Board members.

The Board attends to the functions of SWGGA, planning the social events, outreach, programs, keeping the books. Running the ship. As a new Board member you might ask, what would I be doing? That would depend on your interests. The most important thing that any Board Member does is bring their voice to the Board. We need our members to direct our vision: to continue to set the direction of where we are going as an organization. Consider joining the Board. We need your voice. We can figure the rest out later.

# Attention: Date Change.

The September Meeting at Ponderosa Hall is Thursday, September 11th.

**Social Hour begins at 6:15 p.m. Meetings at 7:00 p.m.**

## Smell Ya Later . . .

It's great when you put your nose to a glass and come away with notes of berries or flowers. But what if the smell is not so appealing. Is it part of the odiferous fragrance of the varietal or something worse? A fault?

Guy Lauterbach has a few examples of some faulted wines that we will pass around for everyone to examine. In particular we will look at volatile acidity (VA) and oxidation, the two most common faults affecting home winemakers. We will talk about wine faults and more importantly, how to avoid them. Remember. The sooner you identify a problem with your wine the easier it is to correct.

In the second half of the program we'll look at another common concern among home winemakers: finding the appropriate level of acidity for an already quite tasty wine. Adding acidity will change the wine. Will adding acidity improve the wine? You know, if it ain't broke. We'll look at the same wine with different levels of increased acidity. Does it help?

And in between the first and second halves of the program we hope you will take a look at the book and goodies table, pick some things, make a donation. See below for more details.

### **A SWGGA Scholarship Fundraiser**

*Presented by the SWGGA Scholarship Committee*

If you're interested in learning more about grapes and wine, or, if you're ready to clean out your book shelves and cabinets, or, if you've got wine stuff that you've loved but need to get rid of,

**Join us at the table at this month's SWGGA meeting.**

Bring wine-related things that you'd like to donate, and your wallet to make a donation for things that you find on the table that you just can't live without.

We'll be on the honor system so you'll donate what you think the item is worth and your donation will go to helping one of this school year's students in their first two years of college!

Important note to remember is that we can't store these materials so if your donation isn't taken, you'll need to take it back home with you. Seems like an excellent incentive to encourage donations.

See you at the September Meeting at the donation table!

*Any donation questions, contact Susan at [sclarabut@gmail.com](mailto:sclarabut@gmail.com)*



You ought to have at least a couple of books with which it is time to part

# In Case You Missed It . . . The Last Meeting at Ponderosa

By Bernie Zimmerman. All photos by Bernie as well. Thank you Bernie.

About 40 people enjoyed our annual "meet the gold medal winners at the fair" program. Rod Byers noted that he, Jackson Starr and Mark Foster had judged 28 wines, down from a typical 50+ entries in prior years. This meant that there were fewer wines of some varieties. So for the judges, varietal characteristics were not as important as balance, or as Rod put it "is the wine true to itself." Rod also explained the trading that went on among the judges when a wine was given different scores and the judges had to come up with a composite score.

The program then allowed us to sample the eight gold medal winning wines, with the wine maker introducing each wine. The wines were Dave Elliott's 2024 Alberino, 2023 Syrah and 2023 Red Blend; Pam and Rodney Bothello's 2024 Pinot Grigio, Diane Houston's 2024 Sauvignon Blanc, which won Best of Show, Scott Ellis' 2024 Carmenere, Doug Olson's 2021 Petite Sirah and Bill Betts' 2023 Red Blend.

A fun evening with excellent wine. bz.



**In March** Dave Elliott and I went out to the ranch to walk around the property with Director Luke Browning. We got a chance to look at the land and get a sense of what was going where. There was a sweet little hillside shelf, a slight slope away from the tree line, uphill from a creek. Maybe a third of an acre. Lots of really big, really gnarly rocks. Gonna take a big piece of equipment to get them out. Luke says he knows a guy.



**In July** Dave and I went back out to the ranch to stake out the actual vineyard space. It felt like it was 100 degrees. Probably was. We looked at our first site selection choice and decided we could do better. Too much wetland at the bottom. Too much drainage down the hill.

It was a long, slender, slightly sloping plateau, with a wetland running parallel on the lower edge. We decided to move the entire vineyard location all the way to the far end of the plateau in what became pretty level ground and further from the wetland area. We were looking to carve out 100 feet by two hundred feet. That is slightly less than half an acre. We figured with tractor turning space and row vines included we would have just about one third of an acre of planted grapes.

Things were going great, until we tried to pound the first stake in the ground. It was rock hard. We couldn't drive a stake a half an inch. It wasn't just solid. It was cement-like. We left that day leaving some sticks lying on the ground as boundary markers.

We updated Luke that we wanted to change the vineyard site and to caution him that this was going to be a really big, and not inexpensive undertaking. Was he sure?

**In August** Dave and I went out there again to meet with Luke to discuss the situation. Luke made it clear he was all in on going forward. Dave presented the vineyard preparation plan (see next page) he had developed for them. Luke was even more all in. He informed us he had secured some grant money.

On the way in that day, going up the property driveway, Dave and I could not help but notice some really big earth moving kind of vehicles on site. Luke did say he knew a guy. Luke was putting in some new roads, hence the heavy equipment, so why not carve out a vineyard at the same time.

We walked down to re-examine the site. Luke wasn't thrilled with our second location. He was planning to build a barn and graze cows right there. Oops. We walked back along the plateau in the direction towards the original site but continued past that and found yet another new site. It was a smaller space, lodged between two really big outcroppings of boulders. Even big for that ginormous piece of heavy equipment across the way. That will be a fight.

It was a good location, so instead, we thought, why not make a smaller space. Why not rip the ground on the (also) smaller section on the other side of one of the rocky outcrops? Have two spaces. Rip them and prepare them both while the equipment was on site. Build the fence later. Maybe one big fence. Maybe two smaller ones. But that's a different job. One job at a time.

We're looking forward to going out there in another month or so to see just exactly what they've done. Then we'll drive some stakes in the ground. Hopefully. Gonna take a bigger hammer.

Dave Elliott prepared a vineyard development plan for the Vineyard Project that is worth sharing with everyone. If you are thinking about planting a vineyard, well, here's the road map.

Don't forget that at the same time you need to be thinking about selecting your varieties and rootstock.

## Vineyard Development Plan

Step	Operation
1	Confirm Site Layout
2	Site/Install Cattle Fence / Gate
3	Rip Subsoil / Remove Rock
4	Sample Soils / Test for Nutrients
5	Define Soil Deficiencies / Source Amendments
6	Incorporate Amendments into Soil Structure
7	Stake out Vineyard Plot
8	Construct Irrigation System Infrastructure (Drip)
9	Construct Drip Distribution System
10	Construct Trellis
11	Construct Deer Fence
12	Source Grapevines

What kind of vineyard would you plant?  
What varieties would you choose?



## In The News

*Excerpted from FERMENTATION by Tom Wark.*

“Gallup recently showed that only 54% of Americans claimed to use alcohol in 2025. This is a 20% decline from its recent nadir of 67% in 2010. The California Wine Institute’s figures show that if you discount the outlier years of the COVID-19 pandemic, per capita wine consumption has been declining since 2017. And returning to the Gallup survey, we learn that only 29% of American alcohol consumers in 2025 identified wine as their alcohol beverage of choice, the lowest number since 1996 when 39% of Americans chose wine as their go-to sip. This is a 25% decline.”

# Winemaking Classes at Gray Pine Winery

We are delighted to announce that once again Guy Lauterbach will be offering his free, three-session introduction to winemaking classes at his Gray Pine Winery later this summer. Spread over a six to eight-week span of time depending on the weather conditions and harvest, Guy takes you on a deep dive into preparing for crush, fermentation, and post fermentation. Each session is about two hours and takes place on Sunday mornings starting at 8:30. Contact Guy directly to sign up for the classes. [rgl@graypinewinery.com](mailto:rgl@graypinewinery.com)



## Session #2 (early September)

Harvest/crush procedures.  
Measurements and adjustments.  
Crush & fermentation, additives, and yeast nutrients.  
Re-hydration of yeast and MLF.  
Inoculation of fermentations.  
Management and measurement of fermentations.

## Session #3 (late September)

Pressing, racking, aging, oaking.  
Dealing with "bad things".  
Blending and bottling.

Contact Guy Lauterbach at

[rgl@graypinewinery.com](mailto:rgl@graypinewinery.com) or 530-432-7045

## SWGGA Market Place

**Lots of Activity Going On Here. See if any of this fits you.**

**From SWGGA members Cecil and Teri Robbins Grapes ← → For Sale**

We have 200 plants of Red Zinfandel wine grapes (approximately 1000 – 1500 pounds) that we are not able to process this year. We would like to offer these grapes to any SWGGA members who would be interested in using them to make their own wine, for free, – if they might donate a bottle or so back to us so we could enjoy the end product.

The grapes are 22 brix so they will be getting ripe soon. They were 19 brix two weeks ago. 23 brix is ideal. About half are getting close to maturity now. Another 500-750 pounds will mature in the next few weeks. Bring your own containers and clippers; I will assist in picking if available. Five gallon buckets hold about 25 pounds.

**Location:** 16454 Alexandra Way in Alta Sierra. About 1.1 miles east from the signal light at Lime Kiln and Hwy 49. The vineyard is gated but I will have it opened for members if you notify me in advance.

Thanks. Cecil and Teri Robbins.

16354 Alexandra Way. Alta Sierra.

530-272-8198. [cecilrobbins@outlook.com](mailto:cecilrobbins@outlook.com)



**Grapes**  **For Sale**

These grapes are from John Geraghty's, Vista del Oro Vineyard located near Auburn. John planted the vineyard in 1999 and has produced numerous award winning wines over the years including winning at the Nevada County Fair.

**Grenache** 1.5-2 tons.

**Syrah** 1/2 ton.

**Sangiovese brunello** 1/2 ton.

\$1200/ton you pick. Crushing and stemming available for extra charge.

John Geraghty. 916 532-0142. Auburn



**Winery equipment for sale by long-time SWGGA member Diane Tosse**



Table top Corker – \$45.00

Basket press – make me an offer

200 liter stainless tank \$200.00 retails at over \$400

150 liter stainless tank \$200.00

Box of miscellaneous lab items – make me an offer

5 gallon carboys – \$12 each ; 6 gallon carboys – \$15 each

email Diane@ [diane@tosse.com](mailto:diane@tosse.com). 530-263-0346

**Grapes**  **For Sale**

**This from member Scott Melamed**

I own the Wolwine's property in Mustang Valley, (off McCourtney) and have 2 varieties of red grapes available for sale for super cheap. The vines are now 10 years old.

**What: Cabernet Sauvignon & Zinfandel.**

There will be about 1/2 – 3/4 of a field box of each variety (maybe a bit more of the Cabernet).

**The offer:** You harvest the grapes and haul them away with you, and the cost is \$250 per variety.

There is easy vehicle access to the vines.

Interested parties are welcome to inspect the fruit and check brix as often as you would like until they're ready to harvest, (probably in about 4 weeks).

**Contact Scott:** 805.415.3721. [smelamed99@gmail.com](mailto:smelamed99@gmail.com)

**Winemaking  
Equipment**

**Adriaan Boer has a few items** some winemaking members may be interested in.

Old style 15 gallon stainless steel kegs for \$15 each.

Size 60 basket grape press in very good condition for \$600.

Silicone bungs \$5 each.

Contact Adriaan directly at 530-272-5148.

**Winery equipment for sale by long-time SWGGA members Jim and Kate Garrett.**

“We are cutting back on our winemaking and therefore selling a variety of our equipment. Everything listed is in excellent condition and usable immediately. Just in time for this year’s crush.”

**Zambelli crusher/destemmer** with stand painted – model with stainless steel chute and custom-made stand on rollers. Currently retails at \$1100.00  
Asking \$650.00



**Speidel 40 liter Vertical bladder press** works with water or air. Retails at \$1600.00  
Asking \$750.00

48 inch stainless steel cap punchdown tool \$50.00

Many **carboys**: all very clean.  
3 gallon carboys - \$12.00 each  
5 gallon carboys - \$12 each  
6 gallon carboys – \$15 each



Heavy duty plastic shovel retail is \$99.99  
Heavy duty plastic pitchfork retail is \$149.99  
Heavy duty plastic rake  
All three for \$85.00

23 large gray picking lugs \$10.00 each. \$200.00 for all 23



6 white 32 gallon Brute food-grade fermenters with lids \$30.00 each set



**If interested, email Kate at [kategarrett44@gmail.com](mailto:kategarrett44@gmail.com) Include your phone number. We will get back to you with details.**

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# SWGGA SWAG

Contact Lisa Whittet, [lwhittet@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lwhittet@sbcglobal.net), if you have questions, or, better yet, want to make an order. She will bring it to the next meeting. Pick it up there.

Vineyard Sign	\$60
Woman's Long Sleeve Shirt	\$40
Men's Short Sleeve Shirt	\$40
Cap	\$20
Corkscrew	\$15
Wine Glass	\$5



**Please Consider Getting Involved.**  
**SWGGA is looking for new Board Members**  
**and Committee members for events**  
**We Need You.**