

Growing Season

The typical six-month growing season extends from mid-April through mid-October, although various vineyard activities can occur year round.

Pruning

In early spring, typically February to March, the vines are pruned and growers begin to plan their vineyard management strategies for the growing season.

Budbreak

After budbreak in mid-April, the canopy begins to develop as new shoots and leaves unfurl with the season's new growth.

Flower

Small clusters of flowers appear at the ends of the shoots in late May and early June. It is during this stage of flowering that pollination and fertilization of the vines takes place.

Set

Almost immediately following pollination and fertilization, the flower begins to develop a seed and grape berry to protect the seed.

Veraison

In Late July and early August, the ripening process begins. During this stage the color of the grape berries change to dark purple/black or yellow/green depending on the grape varieties.

Harvest

The harvest of grapes during September and October is the pinnacle event each season. Harvest timing is the only stage of the seasonal process determined by the winemaker as well as nature.

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Viticulture Practices

Vineyard Management

Environmental Care

Viticulture Practices

Traveling through the Red Mountain AVA, the general row orientation of vineyards becomes apparent. Rows typically run north-south, or at a slight angle (11 degrees) in a northeast-southwest direction. Such orientation allows sunlight to travel across the canopy, providing dappled light to reach the entire vine. The slight angle allows a more balanced occurrence of sunlight on the east and west sides of the canopy.

Vines are typically trained from a fan or vertical shoot position along a bi-lateral or unilateral cordon. Irrigation is applied through drip tubes supplied from deep groundwater wells. Growers must provide ongoing attention to issues such as canopy vigor, which may include shoot thinning and leaf stripping as determined in part by the winemaker's philosophy and style.

Conventional Viticulture practices continue to be maximized by Red Mountain grape growers. By critically examining the perfect balance of plant clonal diversity or carefully experimenting with a variety of natural cover crops, Red Mountain growers are constantly searching for ways to bring out the best of their fruit.

Additional varietals like Cabernet Franc, Roussanne, Mourvrede, Petite Verdot and Sangiovesse are showing great promise to complement the region's established varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah.

Conventional viticulture

Conventional viticulture requires continual evaluation of technological advances and monitoring of the latest scientific research. As an example, the recent development of moisture probes will now provide growers with better data regarding vine performance and ripening.

Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable Agriculture is the pragmatic solution to green farming. It simply refers to the ability of a farm to produce food indefinitely, without causing severe or irreversible damage to the health of the ecosystem.

The 4 Cornerstones of sustainable farming are:

- ✦ Environmental stewardship
- ✦ Economic viability of the farm
- ✦ Health, safety and well-being of workers
- ✦ High product quality

From the points listed above, it is evident that a farm cannot be "sustainable" without

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all of the 4 cornerstones in place.

Sustainable farming consolidates the best principles of all green farming practices into a curriculum format which can be used to guide a grower in the process of reducing a farm's carbon footprint – and becoming a greener producer.

Biodynamic Farming

Biodynamic Farming was first developed by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920's as concerns grew with regard to the decline of the vitality of European soils.

The Biodynamic approach is holistic as it considers both the farm and its soils as a single living organism: self-contained, self-sustaining, and entirely responsible for creating and maintaining its own individual health and vitality. Once the organism is brought into balance, it should be free of any external and unnatural additions.

Compost, compost teas and manures replace synthetic fertilizers as a remedy to restore a natural balance to the soil. It is important to note that some of the finest producers in the world from France to Australia have turned to biodynamic farming with grand cru results.

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Each season, grape growers in Red Mountain continually address the health of their vineyards through responsible management practices. Attention is given to soil management, water management, pest control and weed control. Fortunately, Red Mountain is by nature, one of the most environmentally friendly wine growing regions in the world.

The Cascade Mountain rain shadow has its greatest effect in Red Mountain where annual rainfall is around seven inches and growing seasons are typically dry. The arid climate in Red Mountain means lower mold and mildew pressure in the region. This allows growers to lessen or eliminate their use of sulfur and copper, where other regions with more precipitation (higher mold and mildew pressure) struggle without the use of these elements.

Washington soils are unique among the global wine growing regions. As is also the case in Chile, the sandy Washington soils create conditions which prevent pests like the Phylloxera root louse from propagating, so growers can plant vines with natural rootstocks instead of grafted vines. The colder winters in Eastern Washington also prevent other devastating pests like the Glassy-winged sharpshooter from spreading.

Although growers face an array of pests typical of vineyards—cutworms, powdery mildew, mites, mealybugs, leafhoppers, they continue to search for and utilize controls which avoid unwanted impact.

For issues of weed control, growers increasingly utilize mechanical cultivation, rather than herbicide sprays, to control vegetation without the use of harsh chemicals. Such viticultural practices generally follow those of Vinewise—the Washington guide to sustainable viticulture.

Red Mountain growers take considerable pride in the recognition that Red Mountain is one of the premier wine grape growing areas of the state. With the rapid growth of Washington's wine industry, and in the ongoing recognition of Red Mountain as a premier wine region, Red Mountain growers work to ensure the continued and future success of the region for all who are in the business, and for all who love the wines.

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One environmental issue of significant importance in the Pacific Northwest is the protection and restoration of agriculture watersheds, to ensure the natural aquatic habitat necessary for salmon to spawn and thrive.

Because of the limited use of chemical fertilizers, the judicious application of water and low runoffs, Red Mountain agriculture has little or no impact on these watersheds.

Salmon Safe is a nonprofit organization dedicated to clear and protect North American watersheds. Growers that comply with vineyard farming protocols designed to protect aquatic habitat can become certified as “Salmon Safe”.

Upchurch Vineyard is certified by L.I.V.E. (Low Input Viticulture and Enology), a non-profit organization that promotes and certifies sustainable vineyard practices and has a part of its certification process the Salmon Safe protocols.

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