vinetur

3 things every winemaker should know when pruning vines

Three crucial practices for successful grapevine pruning

Thursday, January 16, 2025



Pruning grapevines is an essential practice in viticulture and plays a crucial role in determining the quality and quantity of grape production. While it may seem straightforward at first glance, the reality is that it requires specific knowledge, experience, and a technical approach that varies depending on the grape variety, climate conditions, soil type, and vineyard objectives. Within this complex process, there are key preventative measures that are often underestimated or treated

superficially, yet they are critical to the future health of the plants. Three fundamental practices stand out in this regard, offering essential protection against diseases.

The first critical factor is to avoid pruning under adverse weather conditions. This aspect, frequently overlooked, is vital because high humidity, rain, or low temperatures can facilitate the entry of pathogens into the wounds created during pruning. Wood diseases such as esca, eutypa dieback, and botryosphaeria dieback are among the most common and severe threats to grapevines and thrive in such conditions. Pruning on dry days with moderate temperatures and stable weather helps reduce these risks and promotes better wound healing.

The second important consideration is disinfecting pruning tools between plants. Tools like shears and saws can act as vectors for disease transmission if not properly sanitized. This is especially dangerous in vineyards where diseases are already present, as pathogens can easily spread from an infected vine to a healthy one. Using appropriate disinfectants, such as alcohol-based solutions, sodium hypochlorite, or agricultural-grade products, ensures that tools are clean before each use, significantly reducing the risk of disease transmission.

The third essential practice is the proper treatment of pruning wounds. These wounds create vulnerable points on the vine, serving as entryways for fungi and bacteria. If left untreated, the consequences can be severe, affecting the vine's growth, productivity, and, in extreme cases, its survival. To mitigate these risks, it is recommended to apply protective sealants or specialized products that create a barrier over the cuts. This practice is especially important for larger wounds on thicker parts of the plant, where healing takes longer and the risk of infection is higher.

Although these three preventative measures may seem simple, their importance lies in their long-term impact on vine health. Neglecting these practices can lead to the development of diseases that not only threaten individual plants but can also spread throughout the vineyard, causing economic losses and jeopardizing the sustainability of the crop.

Pruning grapevines involves more than just trimming branches or shaping the plant. It requires careful planning, a deep understanding of the specific needs of each variety, and precise execution to ensure a balance between the plant's vigor and its productive capacity. These three measures, despite their apparent simplicity, form a fundamental defense against challenges that could compromise years of work. Proper implementation contributes not only to the immediate health of the vine but also to the longevity and sustainability of the vineyard.