

Spring Equinox Winds 2009

We are committed to improving
soil health
vine health
& human health



Under vine pasture management—our experiences and observations



Pasture before and after slashing with under vine slasher heads. —August



Sheep grazing— before & after. The benefits go far beyond just grazing.



Weed management is generally considered to be a high priority in vineyards. However, the objectives of each grower can vary greatly. It was once common to have bare soil under vine, however that practice is unnatural and many plants are adapted to colonize and cover bare soil effectively. Cover crops and permanent swards are now commonly used to improve soil structure, fertility and to compete with weeds. Selecting and developing the most appropriate mix of plant species and culture is vital to ensure the cover crop does not adversely compete with vines for water and nutrients.

Mowing of cover crops can be used to provide mulch material for weed suppression in vine rows, and depending on the timing, seeds can be distributed across the vineyard floor to boost seed stocks for the following autumn.

At Pridham Viticulture we have looked at a variety of weed management techniques and adapted them to suit different vineyard situations including cover crops, permanent swards, mowing, grazing livestock (including sheep and cattle), rolling cover crops, mulching, mechanical cultivation, hand cultivation and chemical weed control including organic herbicides.

These are some of our results and observations

Cover crops have been successfully established using a variety of different grass & clover species to suit the region and have proven to suppress undesirable weeds once established. They can also be useful to harbor beneficial insect populations and for nutrient recycling.

Mowing has proven to be successful in managing permanent swards as well as annual cover crops and effectively spread mulch material onto vine rows for weed suppression. To complement our slasher system we are currently having Ledgard Engineering fit double sided hydraulic under vine slashers to enable full floor mowing of vineyards, particularly useful in organic vineyards that cannot use chemical herbicides.

Rolling of cover crops has also been successfully trialed to suppress innocent weed germination and to provide a useful mulch layer in mid row areas insulating soils from the summer heat.

Mulches have been successfully applied to vine rows using our Seymour Vineyarder spreader and works to improve soil structure and suppress weeds.



Mechanical cultivation and hand cultivation have been used to suppress weeds and improve soil structure but are usually a temporary measure until more sustainable permanent swards have been established.

Chemical weed control is still often used in some situations but the objective is often to limit the growth of permanent grasses to desirable levels, not to create bare soil areas that are difficult to sustain.

To counter the negative effects on the soil from herbicides and surfactants we have successfully used Fulvic Acid additions in herbicide mixes. Fulvic Acid helps to detox herbicide residues to soften the soil life assault and also protects algae in soils.

Organic herbicides have been trialed and we have had mixed results however we have identified a useful product in Organic Crop Protectants “Slasher” that is useful to “burn out” weeds and grasses in areas where mowing or grazing are not possible. The only negative is the cost being substantially more expensive than chemical options. “Slasher” however it is very effective and safe to use in sensitive areas such as adjacent to dwellings, cellar doors, etc as well as for totally organic vineyards. In situations where under vine mowing is used “Slasher” can be useful to spray areas where the mower heads are not able to access weeds and grasses such as around strut wires or where drip lines are too low to mow under.

ECOMAPPING – Environmental Management Systems made easy!

Mention the undertaking of Environmental Management Systems and most people immediately think... ‘time and money’. While it is true that you could conceivably spend thousands on consultants and training, there is another option – one that rewards more than it costs, and one that is fast becoming a world standard... EcoMapping.

EcoMapping is an easy to implement Environmental Management System that encompasses all facets of an enterprise and encourages input from all parties concerned – from top level management to the people on the ground. Essentially based on observations, it is a graphically orientated method of highlighting existing and potential environmental issues and applying a rating in relation to severity, impact and correction.

As more and more people and businesses demand ‘Green’ credentials from their suppliers, EcoMapping makes it possible to supply up to date, easily obtained and interpreted information that demonstrates to all an effective Environmental Management System is in place and acted upon.

We love our soils!!!

If you have any further interest or enquires about the topics in this newsletter please call us.



Ben Pridham 0414 600 342
bpriidham@pridhamviticulture.com.au

Simon Maland 0404 777 268
pv.workshop@pridhamviticulture.com.au

Dig into our website
www.pridhamviticulture.com.au