

Dealing with Winter damaged vines

I know, I know. The buds were hit by a spring frost so there won't be a crop. But they've started growing leaves. And I hate to see that energy go to waste.



But wait a minute. Most grapes are produced on 2nd year growth. That is, the grapes you get next year will come from the new canes growing this year.

← ← **So do you want these new canes?**



Or do you want these new canes? → →



By now, VSP canes

should be to your top wire if they came through the winter well. (pardon the picture but I wanted you to know that these canes have reached the wire. If they look like those in the upper left, it's time to cull.)

Partial winter damage can show up as stunted, often yellowing or brown leaves that are dying. With many new trunks, fruit from primary buds are forming in clusters near the base of the trunks. Obviously the plant is putting its energy into healthy, new tissue. If you have no crop anyway (we won't due to a late frost) and if both the left photo and the right photo represent next year's second growth, why keep the stuff on the left?

With minimal observation, we also found that many of our cordons were missing nodes. If a cordon normally has about 8 nodes and half of them are missing and you're not getting a crop this year anyway, why not replace the cordon with a new one with good internode spacing (4-6 inches) so that next year, you'll have a perfect cordon with no wind-damaged, insect damaged empty nodes that won't fruit anyway. Besides, a new cordon provides you with spurs for 2015 that ALL start AT THE CORDON instead of several inches above it.

It's not too late to replace trunks/cordons, although it's getting more difficult not to knock off new shoots. We're using this year to re-establish healthy vines with better support. Avoid bull-canes if you can, or let them grow and use their side shoots which almost always have closer nodes. Grow lots of new trunks if you can so that the cordons you DO use will grow slower and stronger. We've spent three weeks cutting and retraining on our 2.5 acres. It's a lot of work.

If you have to cut to the ground anyway, with high cordon canes add a middle wire about half-way up the bamboo cane (30-36" above the ground.) Clip both top and bottom wires to the bamboo with bamboo clips (MDT has them.) This will significantly help support the trunks and keep them from bowing as they age and develop a crop. As long as you are retraining.....4000 feet of 12.5 gauge wire only costs \$100!! Here's to a healthy, well-supported crop next year.