



A NEWSLETTER FROM THE GULF COAST WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION

Summer 2025, Vol. 2:3

Bob Hensz, Editor

Table of Contents

President’s Note	2	Rot in Fruit.....	8
From the Editor	3	Harvest 2025.....	9
Paesante Noir	4	Board of Directors.....	10
Post Harvest Priorities	5	Classified Ads.....	11
More Sparkling Blanc Du Bois	7	Calendar of Events.....	11

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From the President's Desk

Greetings fellow Gulf Coast Winegrowers, nothing like a long, hot, wet summer in the vineyard.

A busy quarter with two A&M Enology Webinars (Dr. Botezatu), an A&M Viticulture Pest Management Workshop (Danny Hillin), and 2 excellent April and June GCWA Tailgates. Thanks for Dr. Botezatu and Danny Hillin for A&M Enology and Viticulture Specialist support. Also, thanks to long standing GCWA Members Larry Cress of Wild Stallion Vineyards, and Jerry Watson of Austin County Vineyards for hosting our Canopy Management and Pre-Harvest Tailgates. Great member turnouts for both.

Most of us are finishing up with harvesting our Blanc Du Bois and turning our focus to our Black Spanish plus the newer, later harvesting Walker Varieties. Congratulations if you were lucky enough to miss most of this year's frequent rain showers, you probably had one of our more beautiful BdB crops. But, if you were like me, and your vineyard was wet almost all growing season, then you fought all the dreaded Texas Gulf Coast grape growing challenges...Downy Mildew, Anthracnose, Phomopsis, Berry Burst, Bunch Rot, Critters (Coons, Possums, Deer, Birds, ...), spray rig vineyard access and maintenance, and ultimately Chemistry Stall with low Brix (I couldn't get over 13.5 Brix, 3.0 pH, while the TA was dropping fast). Sorry to the wineries that depended on mine (or others) BdB crops this year; but, sometimes Mother Nature wins, despite our best management efforts.

Although we finish harvest, don't forget to maintain your spray program, keep your canopy health as long as you can, and build up those carbohydrate reserves for next year. It is normal for your older leaves to start falling but your newer leaves will pick up the photosynthesis slack. If you are done harvesting, you can now use your longer PHI, expiring chemicals, like Dithane, to protect against Downy and other fungal diseases. If you still have fruit to harvest, like Black Spanish, then, remember to observe the pre-harvest intervals.

Now is a good time to assess your vines – their health status and ability to carry a balanced crop and canopy. The dreaded freezes in the past years and droughts will continue to show their tail tell signs in the vines' health. I can now see where I need to prune and even trunk (top) my vines in order to rebuild healthy new trunks and cordons.

We are trying to assess the productivity and consistency of our Gulf Coast Vineyards, after these many challenging growing seasons, and new varietals. Please share your harvest details by submitting this year's varietal, acreage, tonnage, harvest date and chemistry. Bob Hensz is discretely consolidating it.

Winemakers, in addition to tasting your 2025 Blanc Du Bois and Black Spanish wines, are looking forward to your results using the new Walker Varieties. We are considering holding a Walker Variety Symposium as part of next years' GCWA Program. Please capture your lessons learned for sharing.

Mark your calendars:

- Sunday, 12 October 2025, Non-Commercial Wine Show, Austin County Fair

Thanks to those that renewed your GCWA Memberships online at our www.growwine.org website.

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Random thoughts from the Editor

Bob Hensz

Ahhhh – Harvest for me and many of you with only Blanc Du Bois is over and now all we need to work on are the post-harvest items. Of course, this list can be quite long, but at the same time it is not time to just let the vines go unattended. I have noticed a lot of the canes hardening as they know somewhere in the future is a cooler, “winter” period. Still though lots of summer left to go and we will see if this brings drier weather or more rain. The rains in the hill country have been devastating, with so much loss of life and property. Our heartfelt prayers go out to the families who have lost loved ones due to the flooding. We have even heard of growers who have lost vineyards. Andy Timmons has been recruiting some growers to across the state to donate fruit to wineries who have lost their access to fruit due to flooding.

In this edition Dr Scheiner discusses Paesante Noir one of the new Walker varieties. He brings us up to date with some of the more recent findings and need for care.

This quarter, our Gulf Coast Extension Specialist, Danny, provides us with some great information on post-harvest care of our vines. He includes canopy management, irrigation, nutrient management, disease management, and weed control. He also reminds us to review our season so we can better plan for the future.

Rot in fruit is always a consideration for growers and winemakers alike. This quarter we have a winemaker's perspective on rot in fruit and how it affects the wine making process from Elisa Jones of Elisa Christopher wines. Great information in this article for growers.

Our discussion of Sparkling Blanc Du Bois continues. This time an article from “The Drinks Business” Magazine that includes some tasting notes. Also, John Rivenberg said, in a State Senate Hearing, East Texas is the sparkling capital of Texas with the Blanc Du Bois grape.

Finally, we have information on the Blanc Du Bois harvest from a number of growers in the Gulf Coast. I have included the chemistry, harvest date and amount harvested whenever available. Thanks to you who sent in your numbers.

Happy Reading!



Paesante Noir

By Dr Justin Scheiner

Paseante Noir is one of the new Pierce's Disease (PD) resistant red wine grape varieties released from UC Davis in 2019. This variety has a good yield potential in the Gulf Coast and early reports on wine quality have been very positive. Paseante Noir also appears to ripen more evenly than Camminare Noir. But alas, no grape variety is perfect. We have received multiple reports and pictures of Paseante Noir with moderate to severe downy mildew infections. At the Texas A&M Research Vineyard, where we grow all five of the UC Davis PD resistant grape varieties, Paseante Noir has shown to be the most sensitive to downy mildew. We have observed the same at Rio Farms in Monte Alto where they also grow all five varieties as well. This may not be deal breaker for Paseante Noir since we do have effective fungicides to control downy mildew, but it's worth noting that we will likely have to give this variety a little more attention than perhaps Blanc Du Bois.

Resources:

Downy Mildew in Grapes Fact Sheet: [Downy Mildew \(Plasmopara viticola\) in Grapes | Publications | AgriLife Learn](#)

2025 Texas Grape Pest Management Guide: [2025 Texas Grape Pest and Weed Management Guide | Publications | AgriLife Learn](#)



Camminare Noir (left) and Paseante Noir (right)

Hidalgo County



Camminare Noir (left) and Paseante Noir (right)

Burleson County

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Post-Harvest Priorities: Setting the Stage for Next Season

By Daniel Hillin, Extension Specialist

As the Blanc Du Bois harvest wraps up across the Gulf Coast, the temptation to take a step back and enjoy a well-deserved break is real - but don't put the pruners down just yet. The post-harvest period, stretching from harvest to leaf fall, is another critical window for setting the stage for next season's success. Vines are quietly and actively storing carbohydrates for energy, repairing any internal and external damage, and preparing to harden off those canes and buds for next year's growth.

So, what's the key to strong, healthy vines next spring? You guessed it, a healthy functioning canopy and well-managed post-harvest care. Let's walk through a few priorities for Gulf Coast vineyards during this important (and often overlooked) stretch.

1. Canopy Management: Finish Strong

After harvest, your canopy's job is far from over as leaves remain the engine of carbohydrate production. Your vines rely on them to rebuild energy reserves in the trunk, cordons, and roots. Excessive regrowth can be common in vigorous Blanc Du Bois vines, especially in response to recent rainfall or severe fungal infection.

This growth can reduce airflow, trap moisture, and further increase disease pressure. Focus on selective thinning of dense shoots and avoid unnecessary topping this late in the season, if possible. We want to let the vine's energy go toward reserve carbohydrate accumulation - not excess foliage growth. A clean, balanced canopy now helps prevent early leaf senescence and strengthens the vine's long-term resilience.

2. Irrigation: Keep the Soil Moist, Not Soaked

Post-harvest irrigation is crucial, particularly in sandy Gulf Coast soils that drain and dry quickly. Well-hydrated vines are able to maintain higher levels of photosynthesis and nutrient transport, both essential for building next year's reserves and lowering overall stress factors on the vine.

Aim to keep root zones near field capacity, using evapotranspiration estimates and rainfall to guide scheduling. Avoid both drought stress and overwatering - both can compromise vine health and dormancy timing. Even through dormancy, periodic winter irrigation is absolutely necessary to support vine root development and maintain certain levels of microbial activity.

3. Nutrient Management: Correct Deficiencies, But Watch the Clock

One of the great advantages of growing grapes in the Gulf Coast region is our long post-harvest period. Post-harvest is one of the best times to address nutrient deficiencies, but timing is everything. Once leaves begin to yellow or fall, uptake efficiency drops sharply.

- **Nitrogen:** Light post-harvest N applications (≤ 10 lbs N/acre) via drip irrigation can help build carbohydrate reserves - but only if applied early. Late-season applications are inefficient and may be leached or volatilized.
- **Potassium & Magnesium:** Both are vital for bud health and next year's ripening. Soil applications now allow winter rainfall to carry nutrients into the root zone.
- **Micronutrients:** Fall is a good time for soil-applied boron, phosphorus, and magnesium if deficiencies exist. Foliar applications should be avoided this late to reduce burn risk during periods of high temperatures.

Above all, the goal is not to stimulate new growth—but to nourish the vine's storage organs. Avoid aggressive fertilization or late foliar sprays that could delay hardening off or burn leaves already nearing senescence.

4. Disease Management: Don't Let Spores Take Hold

The Gulf Coast's warm, wet post-harvest climate is ideal for fungal resurgence. If disease pressure was high before harvest and if rains continue, don't let your guard down.

- **Powdery Mildew:** Post-harvest infections can reduce reserves and increase cold damage risk. If left unchecked after harvest, powdery mildew can develop overwintering spores which can infect the vines the following season.
- **Downy Mildew:** Late outbreaks can lead to premature leaf drop, weakening vines for next spring. Consider one or two preventive sprays with Mancozeb, Captan, or phosphorous acid if rain persists.

As with all any disease prevention program scout regularly and apply controls only as needed, especially in high-pressure blocks. Continue rotating FRAC codes and observe PHIs for any remaining varieties still hanging.

5. Weed Control & Cover Crops: Clean Up and Prepare the Floor

With the vines hedged or shoot thinned and the canopy more open, post-harvest is a great time for targeted herbicide sprays to knock back Bermuda grass, Johnson grass, any other weeds that may have popped up. Be mindful of the chemistry used to control weeds, even at this late stage of growth herbicide damage can still occur.

Also now is the time to consider planting winter annual cover crops to reduce erosion, add organic matter, and help manage soil compaction. Ryegrass, oats, or legumes can all provide a natural mulch layer while suppressing winter weeds.

6. Season Review: Lessons While They're Fresh

The best thing you can put in your vineyard is your footprints, so walk the vineyard while the season is still fresh in your mind. Take note of any blocks with low vigor, disease flare-ups, or unusual fruit set. Tag any vines showing suspicious symptoms—curled leaves, reddening, or dieback—for virus testing. Now's also the time to count missing vines and pre-order replacements if you desire.

Finally, if you have wines fermenting, stop by the winery. Looking at and tasting through initial batches with your winemaker can offer key insights into how your viticulture practices translated into wine quality this year.

Gulf Coast Post-Harvest Checklist

- ✓ **Thin regrowth** and open canopy to minimize disease risk
- ✓ **Irrigate strategically** to support leaf function without excess growth
- ✓ **Apply nutrients early**, based on soil/petiole testing—avoid late foliar sprays
- ✓ **Scout for powdery/downy mildew**, apply fungicides to control disease
- ✓ **Manage weeds** with targeted herbicide applications
- ✓ **Plant cover crops** to reduce erosion and build soil health
- ✓ **Tag symptomatic vines**, note low-performing blocks for future action
- ✓ **Taste and review wines** with the winemaker while harvest is fresh



More Sparkling Blanc Du Bois

Our discussion of Sparkling Blanc Du Bois continues. This time we congratulate Larry Cress Wild Stallion Vineyards, for his gold medal for sparkling Blanc Du Bios (Sparkling Blue Eyes) at the San Francisco Chronicle competition 2023. Congratulations also go to Elisa Jones, Elisa Christopher Wines for her bronze medal at the London England International Sparkling wines competition where 23 countries were represented.

An article from “The Drinks Business” Magazine.

As the article says “The hero grape for Elisa Christopher Wines’ production is Blanc du Bois, a hybrid variety that is little-known beyond Florida and Texas. It was initially developed in 1968 for its resistance to Pierce’s disease, a bacterial threat in the hot and humid southern states. But at the winery, that is far from its only appeal.” The article also includes information and tasting notes about the Blanc.

<https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2025/07/why-one-winery-is-banking-on-fizz-in-the-heart-of-texas/>

These medals and the article are great plugs for Texas Wines and our Gulf Coast Blanc Du Bios.

Also, some other wineries with sparkling wines from Gulf Coast area vineyards using Blanc Du Bios are William Chris, Lewis Wines, Threshold, Loblolly, and Sages. If you are doing a sparkling Blanc Du Bois, please send us a note and let us know so we can add you to the list.

Rot in Fruit – a winemaker's Perspective

By Elisa Jones, Winemaker and owner, Elisa Christopher Wines

What causes rot? Humid, warm conditions under dense closed canopies. Wait, did I just describe grape growing in the Gulf Coast?

Rot in fruit from a winemaking perspective is, to be honest, a nightmare. Rot can create premature browning in a white wine, it can destroy aromatics, deplete yeast assimilable nitrogen (YAN) causing a winemaker to have to switch yeasts at the last minute, and can create issues with clarification and filtration. Even more concerning, significant rot in fruit can cause secondary bacterial infections creating high volatile acidity, and my least favorite, acetobacter. You can spot the growth of acetobacter in wine by the flowers growing on the surface combined with the smell of apple cider. A wine made from fruit with significant rot will eat SO₂ at an extremely high rate and leave a winemaker at a loss for what to do. Fruit that is full of rot can also cause significant stability and spoilage problems for a winery.



In 2023, I made wine for another winery (not one from the Gulf Coast). They provided the fruit, which they grew, and it came in full of rot and sunburn. The vineyard manager was proud of the large number of tons he got per acre, but I had to tell him that half of that many tons of clean fruit would have been much better. I also informed the vineyard manager that I would have refused the fruit in this condition rather than make the wine for my own winery.

The winery wanted to use a certain yeast on the wine, but the juice did not have the nitrogen to feed their choice of yeast due to the condition of the fruit. Instead, a different yeast with low nitrogen needs was necessary. I had to treat the must with an expensive chitosan-based product to avoid acetobacter, add

antioxidants, and ferment at low temperatures – just to have a drinkable wine. I also had to make sure we did not contaminate anything at our winery, so we had to clean picking bins and crush equipment with a SO2/citric mix and clean all picking bins with a hot water pressure washer. All things cost the winery extra money and time. Further, due to the amount of rot, this wine will not age for a significant period.

What is an acceptable amount of rot? 1-4% is acceptable as that is at the level the fruit can be picked through during sorting to remove rot. 5-20% can be treated - but again, at an incredible expense to the winery. Over 20% is completely unacceptable. I would encourage all growers to walk each row and drop all rotted clusters before harvest. Sunburned fruit also needs to be examined as it is susceptible to rot.

A note on sunburned fruit: Speaking as a Texas winemaker, special care must be taken for sunburned fruit. White fruit especially should not be pressed hard to avoid the release of bitterness from the skins. Special products must be added to prevent oxidation and during settling to aid in removing bitter compounds that emerge when making wine from fruit with significant sunburn. This also decreases the volume of extracted juice, and the juice needs to ferment at low temperatures - below 75 degrees. We must also use yeast like one for rot that does not require a significant amount of nitrogen to reduce vegetal characteristics.

It is hard to drop the fruit you worked so hard to grow. However, quality will show in wines made with exceptional fruit. In the late 90s, Helen Turley was the winemaker at Martinelli Winery in Sonoma – one year she had Lee Martinelli Sr. drop over 50% of the fruit from the vines. He was horrified until he tried the wine several years later to check the quality and was surprised at how much people wanted to pay for the wine. As you go into each growing season, remember, you are not just grape growers in the Gulf Coast – you are wine growers. We, the grape growers and winemakers, need to continue to work together to show off the very best Texas has to offer.

Harvest 2025

Below is a chart showing some of the chemistry for Bland Du Bois at harvest for a number of growers in the Gulf Coast. The growers are not identified, but you can see what the range of chemistry at harvest there was across the region. Where possible we tried to get the chemistry at the winery. Many of us know that as much as we try to get the chemistry as accurate as possible from a sample, it seems the winery is a bit different mainly due to the fact they have all the grapes picked crushed and pressed so they get a true composite look at the chemistry of the juice/must.

Blanc Du Bois Harvest Chemistry 2025

	Brix	pH	TA	Amount of grapes (T)	Acreage	Harvest dates		
1	15.6	2.46	n/a	2.5	1	19-Jun		
2	16	3.3	9	6.9		28-Jun		
3	17	3.4	8.4	6.88	2.1	29-Jun		
4	15.5	3.48	n/a	12.74	2	29-Jun	5-Jul	
5	19.3	3.21	6	5.33	1.97	30-Jun		
6	17.5	3.32	7.2	3.89	2.8	2-Jul		
7	16.5	3.71	7.5	9.5	2	2-Jul		
8	17.28	3.2	6.975	22	3	3-Jul	4-Jul	
9	17.5	3.4	n/a	9.3	4	3-Jul	4-Jul	5-Jul
10	13.5	3	6.75	3		8-Jul		
11	18.2	3.65	8	0.35	1			
12	16	3.74	n/a	2.9				
13	19	3.4	13.5	2	1	6-Jul		
14	18	3.3	8.6	4	2	28-Jun		
15	17	3.4	n/a			5-Jul		



GCWA OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>NAME</u>		<u>ELECTED</u>
President	Jim	Brooks	2024
VP	Virginia	Rodriguez	2022
Secretary	Faith	Wright	2025
Treasurer	James	Kasperek	2021
Director	David	Fleming	2021
Director	Dawn	Aschenbeck	2021
Director	Paul	Darst	2021
Director	Bob	Hensz	2025
Director	Mike	Gamble	2022
Director	Art	Delgato	2021
Director	Greg	Cargle	2022
Director	Larry	Cress	2023
Director	Joe	Klenke	2023
Director	Zack	Rodriguez	2025



Classified Ads

This section is for members to advertise equipment items for sale and for equipment and supply items wanted. This is not to advertise grapes for sale or labor wanted, or for harvest personnel you want. Please limit this to equipment and supplies. Send any for sale or wanted items to rhensz70@gmail.com

For Sale:

- Buon Vine Super Jet plate filter, 20cm with some packages of filters for sale. Retail at MoreWinemaking.com for \$599. Asking \$200 or make offer. Contact Bob Hensz 979-229-3131 or rhensz70@gmail.com



- 9+ Cases of clear (flint) bottles with punt. Great for Blanc Du Bios wine! Contact Bob Hensz 979-229-3131 or rhensz70@gmail.com



Gulf Coast Calendar

2025

October 12 – Non-Commercial Wine Show – Austin County Fairgrounds