

# DC Estate Winery South Beloit, IL Aurora Schultz Spring 2021

## Overview of Operation

DC Estate Winery was established in South Beloit, IL in the early 2010s; this family-run operation has incorporated the art and science of grape growing and winemaking since its start in 2014. The small business is still in the beginning stages of cultivating quality grape harvests; due to harsh winter weather in 2018, most of the above-ground vine structures were killed, requiring the vines to be retrained from the ground up. Though I was mainly mentored, I was also able to utilize time working alone, making me comfortable working in the field independently.

## Internship Responsibilities

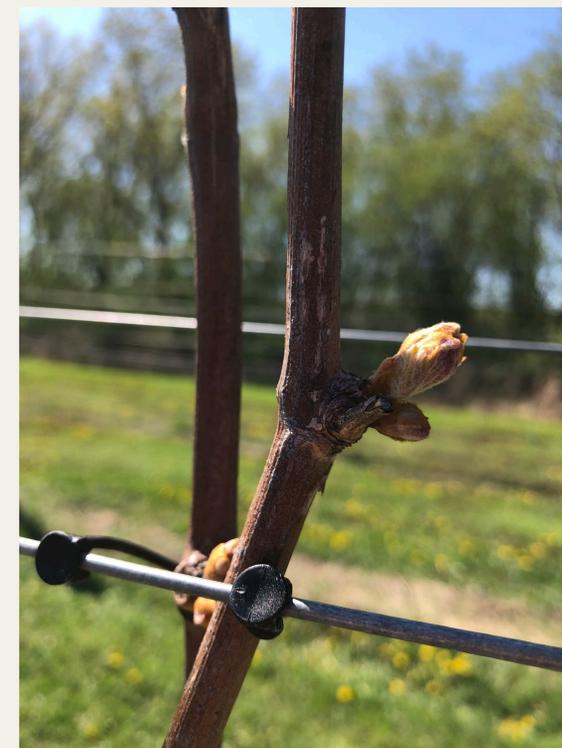
During my time at DC Estate Winery, I worked alongside Patrick Sornsin—vineyard Foreman—who works around the vineyard maintaining the vines, landscaping, and everything else that needs to get done on site.

- Spur prune the grapevines that had well-established cordons while maintaining adequate spacing, so the vine is not overcrowded and overcropped.
- Scouted for winter damage, pest and disease damage, and trunk damage requiring trunk replacement.
- Trunk-trained young, 2-year-old vines
- Maintained the trellising—wires and posts—by replacing, mending, leveling, loosening, and tightening the trellis system.
- I learned to scout the vineyard blocks at least one time per week, once buds began swelling, to watch the progression of the vines coming out of dormancy, losing their hardiness as spring began. This is important to know for several reasons, but during my internship, it was specifically involving the timing of certain applications of fungicides and other pesticides.
- Hand-weeded around the base of the vine trunks in each block.
- Learned how to dig a root ball for transplanting into blocks where vines required replacement.

Transplanting a young Itasca vine between bud swell and budbreak



Above: High-cordon trained Itasca block  
Below: Itasca vine during bud swell, just before budbreak



## Summary

This internship experience has helped me become more confident pruning grapevines for Midwest—specifically northern Illinois—climate. I recognize how a vineyard is managed not only impacts the fruit, but also the resulting wine; I recognize a need to adapt and continue to learn throughout my career; I recognize that this was the right undergraduate degree to start my professional career. Just as a better understanding of the pruning practices used on dormant grapevines in northern Illinois was gained, so too was a desire to broaden my viticultural knowledge. I learned that there is so much more for me to learn. Vineyard management is not an easy profession, but it is undoubtedly rewarding.



During the middle of dormant-season pruning