Winemakers LLC (Sunnyside, WA)  
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Introduction

Winemakers LLC is a company that operates at many vineyards throughout the Pacific Northwest. For my internship, I worked at their farms in Washington State. The first vineyard, Alder Ridge Vineyard, is in the Horse Heaven Hills appellation. The vineyard was planted in 1997. The other vineyard I worked at, Phil Church Vineyard, is located in Sunnyside Washington, and is in the Yakima Valley Appellation. It was planted in 1979.

Responsibilities

During my time at Winemakers LLC, I had many responsibilities. Below are some of the main jobs that I did.

- Cluster Counts
- Cluster Weights
- Scouting

Here I am performing cluster counts for each block. The idea is to have a certain number of vines per block where you count the number of clusters on each vine. Doing this will help project the size of this years harvest in terms of the yield.

In this photo I am getting ready to do cluster weights for a block. The idea of cluster weights is another way to help project harvest size and how many tons of grapes per acre the company can expect from each block during harvest. For each block, I took around 100 clusters scattered throughout the block and weighed them. I recorded the data for each block and then provided it to my internship mentor to input the data into the program the company uses.

Scouting for pests, diseases, and other nuisances to the vines was also an important job of mine. In the photo on the left above, I am placing restaurant take out boxes in vineyard blocks. These boxes act as phylloxera “traps”. Buckets are also another form of a “trap” that can be used. The idea is to plant them and if phylloxera is present, you would see aphids when checking the inside of the box. In the photo above on the right, I am looking for vines with crown gall and marking them for removal in the winter time after harvest. Crown gall is a disease that stunts the growth of the plant, and can eventually over time kill the entire plant.

Summary

Having this hands on experience has expanded my knowledge of vineyard operations and why it is conducted this way. This internship was a good place to start in enhancing my skills and getting an idea of what a job in this field would look like. In this job, I have learned many new skills and strengthened some skills I already had that will aid in my professional growth. New skills acquired include learning how to look for pests and diseases, how to conduct crop estimation, and how other factors such as weather patterns affect the plants. These new skills will help me in my future be more prepared for possibly a similar job and help me understand concepts in my viticulture and enology courses in my Junior and Senior year, a goal of mine that I had before starting this internship. In regards to enhancing skills I already had, I further improved my communication skills and gained further realization that communication through phone is important when you are on a farm that is very large. Also, having hands on experience and seeing concepts learned in class from textbooks or pictures is eye opening. This was another goal of mine before the internship. Seeing concepts in person that I have previously learned in class, and how much more it now makes sense was something I hoped to experience. For example, I have learned about the phenological stages in class some what, but seeing it in person is much different and does justice more than seeing pictures. Overall, this was a great experience and I am thankful to have had the opportunity to intern at Winemakers LLC.