

Grape Growers Harvest Report 2019

Participants:

Liberty Hills Estate and Winery – Jim and Marcia Compton

Melancy Hills Vineyard – Mel Heffley

Totem Pole Ranch and Winery - Don and Joan Hopley

Vin Laughery – Don Laughery

Raspberry Run – Pat and Jack Moyer

Bonnybrook Vineyard – Larry Smarr

Question 1 – How would you describe this past season's harvest?

Compton's – We had an excellent season!

Heffley – It was the second-worst season I have had.

Hopley's – We had a good year.

Laughery – It was a small yield year.

Moyer's – We had a lousy year.

Smarr – It was a poor year for me.

Question 2 – What fruit/grapes did well and what did not do well?

Compton's – We had Black Rot hit our Riesling and DeChaunac grapes.

Heffley – Marechal Foch did well but the Niagara did not.

Hopley's – Chambourcin did well for us.

Laughery – Niagara, Baco, Foch, and Buffalo did well.

Steuben, DeChaunac, Vignoles crop was average.

Noiret, Rougeon, Corol Noir, Chambourcin, Cayuga, Riesling,

Landot Noir and all vinifera did not do well.

Moyer's – Niagara, Cayuga, Catawba, and Foch did well. Noiret, Baco Noir and Chancellor the birds got to them.

Smarr – Niagara and the Traminette grapes did okay. Cabernet Franc did not fully ripen so we picked them early.

Question 3 – Was weather a factor this season?

Compton's – September was dry, but it helped our grapes tremendously.

Heffley – No, I had trouble with wildlife.

Hopler's – No, we had good weather.

Laughery – No.

Moyer's – Yes, it was too wet for us.

Smarr – Yes.

Question 4 – What problems did you encounter or struggle with this season?

Compton's – Besides the Black Rot on two grapes, we had a busy year with the bees. However, we used a smoker to keep them away from the grapes. It worked very well.

Heffley – I had problems with birds, deer, and a bear.

Hopler's – THE DEER

Laughery – It was a recovery year from Pearson's disease in 2018.

Pearson's is a bacteria that infects the sap which drains vital fluid from the vine. It is spread vine to vine by sharp shooter bugs that burrow into the vine to drink the sap.

It killed nearly all vinifera in their hybrid ancestry.

Moyer's – We had problems with birds and standing water.

Smarr – It was just the weather I struggled with. I had little to no rot because of the heat. There was reduced vine vigor due to the lack of water.

Question 5 – What was your harvest yield for 2019?

Compton's - We don't keep measurements of amounts but we had plenty of grapes this year, more than in previous years.

Heffley – 2869 pounds.

Hopler's – We lost 100 vines of Merlot and Zinfandel due to the deer.

We got 40 gallons of juice from each.

One thousand eight hundred pounds of Cayuga and one-ton of Chambourcin. Frontenac was 729 pounds. The birds got to the Traminette and the Riesling even though we netted the vines.

Laughery – I had 351 pounds. I get 1400 pounds in a good year.

Moyer's – We only got 10 gallons this year.

Smarr – 1.5 tons.

Question 6 – What is your normal harvest for a season?

Compton's – We don't keep records of how much we harvest each year.

Heffley – 6000 to 7000 pounds.

Hopler's – This is the first year since we have gone to commercial grade growing. We are now planting 4 foot apart rather than the 6 – 8 feet apart. We have changed to pruning commercially.

Laughery – 900 to 1400 pounds.

Moyer's – 40 to 70 gallons.

Smarr – 6 tons.

Question 7 – What do you plan to do differently this season to improve/help your harvest?

Compton's – We plan to prune back hard this year and add Calcium

Bicarbonate in the soil to cut down the acidity in the grapes.

Heffley – I am thinking of putting in an electric fence and barbed wire.

Hopler's – I want to have better deer retardant. We will need to be inventive in eliminating Japanese Beetles as we will be Organic. We will need to make sure the vines are draped better.

Laughery – I will be planting hybrids that resist disease.

Moyer's – Pray harder.

Smarr – Pray for good weather. All my practices will remain the same as in past years – pruning, hedging, spraying, etc.

Question 8 – Do you have any unique stories you would like to share about this harvest or others?

Compton's – Alex Sprague had bought 4 different grapes and we helped him plant them. After the harvest and before the next season began, we asked to help by pruning for him. Marcia kept the cuttings and replanted them in her field. After a while Marcia confessed to Alex she had kept his cuttings and planted them. It was fine by Alex. When they asked what grape it was, he had no idea. At a SWiG picnic, a member saw the field and said: "I see that you are growing Baco Noir". That is how they learned what the grape is that grows in their vineyard.

Heffley – I had 2700 pounds of Landot Noir sitting outside. I saw the next morning it was overturned and most of it was gone. I discovered the white. This is the reason I am considering an electric fence.

Hopler's – Last Spring the Malbec we got was not to have been inoculated. It started fermenting and bubbling over like a Root Beer float.

Laughery – No. The last two seasons were a bummer watching my vinifera die, Carmenere, Sangiovese, Tempranillo, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Shiraz, Petite Syrah, Carmine, and Cabernet Franc – all dead. The Nebbiolo and Pinot Gris are barely alive.

Moyer's – In the past, we had so many grapes. Since 2015 it has been too wet. I have had to wear muck boots to pick. They won't produce if their roots are underwater.

Smarr – The Cabernet Franc was beginning to shrivel at about 18° Brix and the seeds were still green, thus the tannins were not developed. We picked it all for Róse. Chaptalization was required for sufficient alcohol.

If you have corrections, please send them to swig.communication.comm@gmail.com