

Canes and Casks: Winter Work for the Winegrower

Growing grapes requires hard work, most of the time. At other times, there is some relief from the hard work and the winegrower earns a little well deserved time off. Typically there is a period of time after the harvests of fruit in late September/early October and before the pruning season begins in midwinter, when growers are hard to find. Unless you go looking for them on white, sandy beaches in warm tropical regions.

But eventually these growers migrate back to their vineyards to tend the vines. There is a beautiful seasonality to working with plants. I have come to enjoy the annual cycle of growth and dormancy that occur in a vineyard. The predictable timeline of events that occur as the plant responds to weather and soils in the environment: dormancy in winter, a flush of new growth in spring, full foliage and flowering in summer, and the harvest of fruit in fall. This cycle repeats every year. In some vineyards, the vines have gone through this annual growth cycle for over one hundred years.

In the Umpqua, we have a history of producing grapes that dates back to 1849 when Jesse Applegate established his home in Yoncalla and planted both an orchard and vineyard. In fact, our area has been known for horticultural crops (including apples, prunes, mellons, berries and grapes) for a long time. The Douglas County Museum of