

The vine post



Vine-Works management and technical scouting – A sum greater than its parts.

Nothing beats hands-on technical experience and physical presence in a vineyard when managing vines. Not yet anyway. Although the technology is out there, in the UK, it is unlikely that a single site is of a scale that would justify the expense of a lot of it. We'll never say never, but our tried and trusted method of getting actual people among the vines continues to produce results and is something we will always promote. It's a feeling and sensing thing too. We do incorporate some technology into our management service and it is an area we explore all the time with the intention of pushing the boundaries of what we can do.

So what does it entail? At Vine-Works, we visit a newly planted vineyard at least seven times a year, year-old vineyards 13 times and mature vineyards we visit 16 times. We have the benefit of not one, but four technical scouts, as mentioned in last month's column. And we are growing! We partner with two tech companies: Vidacycle and Trak365 – specifically for our scouts in the vineyard to record data in real-time and interpret it back in the office, producing timely reports, and have them expertly translated into an action plan. Not only this, but the information is available via both tech platforms on your smartphone, anywhere you go.

Every vineyard is different and as such our management services are customised to each client – the different vineyard owners, managers or consultants. Our team of viticulturists and scouts are in constant communication with these relevant parties with a goal of never losing the feel for a place. Not unlike the holy trinity of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier, we are greater than the sum of our parts with all of this in motion from pruning time to harvest. Our labour teams are an extension of this service, providing constant feedback via the supervisors managing the work they are doing in the vineyard.

A photographic diary of every vineyard is par for the course. It's an essential requirement for the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain initiative and is something that we use to track the growth stages of the vines. We also track Growing Degree Days, (GDD) using Trak365's real-time temperature and humidity data, plugging it directly into the Vidacycle hub Sectormentor, using a newly released link between the two apps. Once again, the combined skills of the three companies: Vine-Works, Trak365 and Vidacycle allows us an in-depth understanding of the development of the vines.



For example, at the time of writing this, the accumulation of GDD at Bee Tree Vineyard, (Vine-Works' own site) is up to 120 and there are eight leaves separated on the vines with inflorescences beginning to elongate. The increase in growth and GDD has been exponential – as you can see in the diagram below – and, as such, this gives us a better indication of when harvest will be. We know that we are not nearly as far behind at this time as we had previously thought. The next step, in line with what many agronomists offer, will be integrating disease modelling – whereby we will predict disease events such as Botrytis, Powdery mildew and Downy mildew and act to prevent them using less and less pesticides.

With us as your vineyard managers and technical scouts, there is a reassurance that there are no flaws in your grape production. We are a well-oiled machine and would be happy to put our technical skills to use in more and more vineyards going forward.

