



Ah, Spring! For many people it means snow and ice still, but here in St. Helena, as in many other parts of the Napa Valley, it means benevolent sunshine and warm temperatures. The season came early – some say earlier than last year – and many things are blooming. The pluot tree Jim is growing is positively radiant, and as beneficiary of his hard work, I hope that means a bumper crop - well – more than the four pluots we got last year at least!

A key vineyard task – perhaps **the** key vineyard task we do early in the year – is to prune the vines. The buds to produce the year's crop were set during the previous growing season. During pruning, for each individual vine, we decide how many of those buds we want to allow to grow. The buds produce shoots, which will eventually bear the grape clusters. During pruning, we can force the vine to focus its energies on growing the number of shoots we think is appropriate so that the fruit each vine produces is concentrated and top quality.

At pruning, we can also decide in which direction we want the shoots to grow, which determines the distribution of shoots, and eventually leaves and fruit, throughout the vine. This helps us ensure that each shoot will get the right amount of sunlight and shade to allow it to ripen its fruit evenly.



At Young Inglewood, we got through pruning - barely – before budbreak. Now that the tender buds have broken through, we are on the alert for cooler nighttime temperatures that might foretell a freak frost that will nip the buds, and any fruit they might produce. In the balmy day time temperatures frost seems hard to imagine, but anyone who farms will tell you it can happen and will sometimes.



As I write, it is mid March. We have a healthy growth of cover crop between the vine rows, and it is time to do something with it. Cover crops are grown to provide extra nutrition to the soil and provide competition for the vines, so they don't get too fat and happy. Cover crops can also attract pests which would otherwise attack the vines. Once ours has grown, we can decide whether to mow it, or whether to till it into the soil, a decision that is made vine row by vine row, or sometimes half row!

I hope you've enjoyed this peek into the early year vines at Young Inglewood. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to email me at

jacky@younginglewood.com. I'd love to hear from you!

