



A NEWSLETTER FROM THE GULF COAST WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION

Fall 2025, Vol. 2:4

Bob Hensz, Editor

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GCWA Officers and Directors – 2025

OFFICERS:

President: Jim Brooks
 Past President: Kimbrough Jeter
 Vice-President: Virginia Rodriguez
 Secretary: Faith Wright
 Treasurer: James Kasperek

DIRECTORS:

Dawn Aschenbeck
 Greg Cargle
 Larry Cress
 Paul Darst
 Art Delgado
 David Fleming
 Mike Gamble
 Bob Hensz
 Joseph Klenke
 Zack Rodriguez



From the President's Desk

Howdy Texas Gulf Coast Winegrowers, harvests done, wine fermenting, aging, bottling, and vineyards going to sleep. Time to catch our breath a little as the holiday season rapidly approaches.

A busy last quarter with our primary focus on successful harvests and wine fermentation. Some had great success, while many of us unsuccessfully fought the grape harvest chemistry challenges from excess and untimely rains and heat this year; plus, struggles from residual vine damage of previous year freezes and droughts. Still time to assess our vines for heavy pruning or replacement next year.

Thanks again to long standing GCWA Member, Jerry Watson of Austin County Vineyards, for hosting our last Canopy Management and Pre-Harvest Tailgates, refreshers on Crop Estimating, and Paul Darst for the Grape Chemistry demonstration.

Your GCWA Board met on 27 Aug, 2025 to discuss planning for next years' GCWA Programs. The following are the highlights for 2026. In addition to our Annual Field Day, Chemical Bulk Buy, Commercial Wine Show, Quarterly Tailgates and Enology Webinars, we are working with A&M AgriLife for a Walker Variety Symposium in May, and a new GCWA Wine Event in August.

2026 Calendar:

- **Jan:** Chem Pickup (*Pruning Tailgate*)
- **Feb 6:** Watson Field Day (*Annual Mtg*)
- **Mar/Apr:** 1st Quarter Tailgate (*Shoot Thinning...*)
- **May/June:** 2d Quarter Tailgate (*Leaf removal, Crop Estimating...*)
- **May 29:** Walker Variety Symposium (*Thomas Ranch, Anderson*)
- **July/Aug:** 3d Quarter Harvest (*BdB, BS, Walker, ...*)
- **Aug:** GCWA Wine Event (*Gulf Coast Grapes – Wines*)
- **Oct:** Non-Commercial Wine Show (*Austin County Fair*)
- **Dec:** GCWA Bulk Chem Order (*Update List, Prices, ...*)

Input Requests:

- Please send us your member input / recommendations for any other additions or deletions to our program, and specific topics or speakers wanted for our Feb 6 Watson Field Day.

- Now that we have finished most of our harvests, please share your harvest details by submitting a list of this year's varietal, acreage, tonnage, harvest date and chemistry. Bob Hensz is discretely consolidating it for our use in assessing our Gulf Coast Vineyard productivity, consistency and winery needs. e.g. Cat Spring Vineyards, Blanc Du Bois, 2ac, 2.5t, 7 Jul 2025, Brix: 18.6, pH: 2.86, TA: 9.45

Finishing out 2025:

- Sunday, 12 October 2025: Non-Commercial Wine Show, Austin County Fair
- (T) 12 December, 2025: Research Symposium (Bi-Annual, Dr. Botezatu)
- December, 2025: Bulk Chemical Buy Input (assess your vineyard chemical requirements).

COL(R) Jim Brooks,
President, GCWA
www.growwine.org
Catspringvineyards@gmail.com



Random thoughts from the Editor
Bob Hensz

We are now into fall and although the temperatures in the mid-Gulf Coast region are well into the 90s, the mornings are significantly cooler. This promises to eventually feel like a real fall with changing leaf colors and vines going to sleep for the winter, or more like a nap in the Rio Grande Valley, however long that may be.

In this edition Viticulture Specialist Danny Hillin delves into soil. Here he discusses testing, sampling methods, key soil properties, then, what to do with your soil test results. This is very useful information for all our Gulf Coast growers.

Dr. Scheiner discusses the Munson Legacy project. The project is being done in cooperation with Grayson College, which has a number of the Munson varieties. Justin also includes links to resources where we can find out more about the Munson varieties. This promises to be an interesting project that we will hopefully be able to follow more closely as it progresses.

Fran comes back with “Fall and Our Vines.” We all are looking forward to them going dormant and giving us a bit of a break before we start pruning again, but we need to consider their health during the fall season.

In this issue and upcoming issues, we include a special section for you to meet our GCWA directors and officers. For many of us, they may be just a name on paper but read on to find a little more about them.

Happy Reading!



Know Your Soil: Using Soil Testing to Guide Vineyard Nutrition

By Daniel Hillin, Viticulture Program Specialist – Gulf Coast

In Texas, healthy vines start from the ground up. Our soils are our most precious resource, as they are the foundation for water and nutrient uptake and overall vine growth. Understanding how to interpret what the soil is telling us and supplementing them correctly is still one of the most challenging and least understood components of vineyard management. Texas alone contains over 1,300 unique soil series that are organized into nine recognized soil orders, each with their own distinct properties that influence nutrient makeup and availability, water uptake and movement, and overall vine health potential. Understanding the composition of what lies beneath your vineyard and how it changes over time in response to vine growth is crucial to developing an effective nutrient management plan.

Why Soil Testing Matters

Soil testing provides a direct snapshot of the current chemical and physical properties that influence grapevine growth, including: the soil texture, cation exchange capacity, organic matter content, and salinity. However, the true value of a soil test comes from interpreting the results and then correlating them with your observations of this year's canopy vigor, overall crop load, and any visible leaf nutrient symptoms collected throughout the season. This holistic approach helps determine whether nutrient imbalances stem from any soil limitations, management practices, or other environmental stressors.

Understanding the framework of your soil type also can help improve irrigation efficiency and nutrient application timing. For example, sandy soils common in most parts of the Gulf Coast tend to drain water quickly and leach nutrients at a faster rate, while heavier clays hold water and nutrients longer but are also prone to more compaction issues and poor drainage. Understanding these dynamics is essential for growers to fine-tune their fertilization and irrigation programs for their specific site conditions. Many times, growers deal with multiple combinations of soil management challenges across single vineyard sites or even within individual blocks.

What and How to Sample

Representative soil sampling is critical for understanding exactly what the current soil conditions under your vines are. Collecting soil cores from both the 0–8 inch and 8–16-inch depths to capture the active root zone is the best combination to give you the most accurate picture of the current status of your soil. Combining several subsamples across a vineyard block, while avoiding low wet spots, or areas at the end of vine rows where vigor can be excessive is ideal to get the best “average”. Consistent sampling locations and timing from every few years, if healthy vine growth is optimal, allow for meaningful comparisons and soil activity trend tracking. The [Texas A&M AgriLife Soil Testing Laboratory](#) offers detailed instructions for soil sampling procedures. In addition, AgriLife Extension viticulture specialists can help with analysis specifically for challenges related to vineyards in Texas including: texture, pH, electrical conductivity, organic matter, and nutrient levels.

Key Soil Properties to Review

- **Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC):** Indicates the soil's ability to retain essential nutrients such as calcium, potassium, and magnesium. Soils higher in clay or organic matter typically have greater CEC and nutrient-holding capacity.
- **Organic Matter:** Improves soil structure, water retention, and microbial activity. Gulf Coast soils can be low in organic matter, so incorporating cover crops or compost if needed can enhance long-term fertility while decreasing stress on the vines.
- **Texture and Drainage:** Soil texture, or the percentage of sand, silt, and clay in a soil greatly affects irrigation frequency and nutrient leaching. Sandy soils generally may require smaller, more frequent fertilizer applications than heavier clays. Each site is different and must be managed accordingly.
- **Salinity and Sodium:** Elevated sodium levels (SAR above 6) can degrade soil structure and restrict root growth. Early identification through soil and water testing helps mitigate salinity issues in the vineyard.

Putting Test Results to Work

Soil test results are a guide, not a prescription. A vineyard fertilizer program should be an all-encompassing system that takes many factors into account including vine age, size, crop load, rootstock, and overall vigor. Younger vines and lower-vigor blocks generally require more frequent lighter fertilizer applications spread out over the growing season, while mature, high-yielding vines will generally require more nutrients to maintain balance. Remember, the goal is vine balance, not simply pushing vegetative growth. Pairing soil test data with your physical presence out in the vineyard is the best combination for long-term nutrient and soil health management.

In Closing

In conclusion, understanding and managing vineyard soils is a constant and ever-changing process. Regular soil testing, when combined with careful vineyard observation, allows growers to make informed decisions that support balanced vine nutrition, efficient nutrient applications, and overall sustainable productivity. Healthy soils grow healthy vines, and that begins with knowing what's beneath your feet.

For a more deep dive into [Understanding Vineyard Soils](#), or [Knowing Your Texas Soils](#), please check out our vineyard soils publications on AgriLife Learn.



Celebrating T.V. Munson's Legacy

By Justin Scheiner, Ph.D.

This fall Texas A&M began a research project dubbed the Munson Legacy Project. A major objective of this research is to collect and authenticate as many grape varieties developed by T.V. Munson as possible. Aside from helping the French solve the phylloxera crisis in the nineteenth century, T.V. Munson was a

prolific grape breeder testing over 75,000 seedlings and ultimately naming 300. It's hard to image, even in modern times, planting and evaluating so many grapevines. If you're interested, you can read more about his testing efforts and see some the descriptions he gave his grapes in his Foundations of American Grape Culture [book](#) and in his T.V. Munson & Son's Nurseries" [catalogs](#).

Once collected and authenticated, researchers at Texas A&M will map the DNA of the Munson varieties and upload the data to an online open access global repository where researchers, grape breeders and other interested parties can access it. This will effectively allow grape breeders to carry Munson's work of developing resistant grape varieties forward. One can assume that untapped sources of pest and disease resistance exist in the Munson collection. As grape breeders in Europe and the U.S. look towards native American grapes for sources of fungal disease resistance, perhaps T.V. Munson will once again play a role in finding a solution.

The Munson Research initiative also includes a collaboration with Grayson College. Grayson College is located in Denison, Texas, where T.V. Munson lived and carried out his grape research. The [T.V. Munson Memorial Vineyard](#) at Grayson houses a collection of T.V. Munson grape varieties and fulfills requests for plant material. In fall 2025, Robin Bogue was named Professor and Director of the T.V. Munson Viticulture & Enology Program. Robin is a graduate of Fresno State University and worked as a winemaker for over ten years in California. We look forward to her contributions instructing students in the Grayson College Viticulture & Enology Program and preserving the legacy of T.V. Munson.

While at Grayson College a few weeks ago, Robin, Michael Cook (Viticulture Program Specialist for North Texas), and I tasted a few varietal wines made from Munson grapes. It's rare to find commercial wines made from Munson grapes but were able to taste a Frizzante style Lomanto from Enoch's Stomp. It had a pronounced jammy flavor that lent itself perfectly to the sweet sparkling style. Enoch's Stomp also makes an estate Champanel, another Munson variety with good disease resistance. Of the 60 to 70 Munson varieties still in existence, very few have been evaluated using modern viticulture and enology techniques. One of Robin Bogue's goals is to make wines with each of Munson varieties to determine their quality potential. Perhaps there's a hidden gem waiting to be uncovered.

Munson Varieties



Beacon



Lomanto



Bailey



Extra



Champanel



Captivator



Cloeta



Wine King



Meet Your Directors

You may not know all of our directors and officers of the GCWA, so read a brief bio in this issue about our directors:

James Kasparek - Treasurer

Starry Night Vineyards - Growing wine grapes in the Texas Gulf Coast is not for the faint of heart, it takes a huge amount of intestinal fortitude to operate a vineyard in the Gulf Coast. James and Debie, his wife started Starry Night Farms in 2013 planting 1.5 acres of Blanc Du Bois (BDB), on a shoestring budget. The following year they added another 1.5 acres of BDB.

“Over the years we have learned our lessons, mostly through the school of hard knocks. We have found groups of people that are willing to work during pruning, others that are willing to help harvest and increase our customer base for our fruit. In considering the Gulf Coast, with its longer growing season, rapidly expanding wine industry, proximity to regional population centers, many different terroirs and in spite of the weather challenges, the Gulf Coast Region is poised to become one of Texas’ premier wine regions.”

Larry Cress

Chairman of New Tech Global Companies, a global provider of engineering, environmental and staffing personnel since 1998. Owner of Wild Stallion Vineyards and Winery, established in 2009 in Spring, Texas. Chairman of Houston Furniture Bank Charities, and Graduate of Texas A&M in Petroleum Engineering in 1976.

Dawn Aschenbeck

I’m a Texas A&M graduate and spent 30 years as a teacher before retiring to focus on the vineyard. My sister-in-law, Tammy Ruether, and I co-own Cummins Creek Vineyards, with strong support from our husbands, Ronnie Aschenbeck and Kevin Ruether. We planted our first vines—Blanc Du Bois—in 2013, and in 2020, we added Camminare Noir using the Watson system.

Bob Hensz

Mound Prairie Vineyards - The wine bug bit me as I finished high school 20 miles from Napa and was able to get a sip or two from my parents’ glasses as they did tastings. My interest, other than drinking a few wines, stayed dormant until about 2005 when my children suggested I should plant a vineyard to make coming home more attractive to them. So, in 2007 I planted my first grapes on land that had been in the family since 1879. In the following years I planted Blanc Du Bios until I had about 2.5 acres of it. During this time, I also began making my own wine. Working in a vineyard, although tedious, is a labor of love, Which I intend to continue as long as I can.



GCWA OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>NAME</u>		<u>ELECTED</u>
President	Jim	Brooks	2024
VP	Virginia	Rodriguez	2022
Secretary	Faith	Wright	2025
Treasurer	James	Kasperek	2021
Director	David	Fleming	2021
Director	Dawn	Aschenbeck	2021
Director	Paul	Darst	2021
Director	Bob	Hensz	2025
Director	Mike	Gamble	2022
Director	Art	Delgato	2021
Director	Greg	Cargle	2022
Director	Larry	Cress	2023
Director	Joe	Klenke	2023
Director	Zack	Rodriguez	2025



Fall and Your Vines

by Fran Pontasch Hensz

Autumn was supposed to arrive last month, but summer is determined to overstay it’s welcome for the next month or two. With no autumnal brisk breeze swooshing in, even the dog is avoiding the outdoors.

We still, however, need to prepare our vines for a surprise blue norther. Downy mildew pressure is low, leaving managing irrigation and the vineyards our main concern. Some of the tips picked are:

- Continue to mow so the clippings as a mulch.
- Remove the weeds that encroach within the vine row.
- Maintain soil moisture at a level that avoids dehydration which leads to winter injury and overwatering that might encourage unwanted new growth.

Classified Ads

This section is for members to advertise equipment items for sale and for equipment and supply items wanted. This is not to advertise grapes for sale or labor wanted, or for harvest personnel you want. Please limit this to equipment and supplies. Send your info to rhensz70@gmail.com.

For Sale:

- Buon Vine Super Jet plate filter, 20cm with some packages of filters for sale. Retail at MoreWinemaking.com for \$599. Asking \$200 or make offer. Contact Bob Hensz 979-229-3131 or rhensz70@gmail.com



- 9+ Cases of clear (flint) bottles with punt. Great for Blanc Du Bios wine!
Contact Bob Hensz 979-229-3131 or rhensz70@gmail.com

