



PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

Winter-Spring 2012

What a difference a year makes. Last year we had record rainfall and this year we have just had our first significant rain of 2012 and we are in the middle of January!

The cut flower industry is still slow and steady. As they say, “nothing to write home about”, but it is still going. There is additional shrinkage in the amount of roses being grown and soon there will be less than 10 rose nurseries in California. The quality of flowers is still fairly good, considering the abundance of sunlight we have had this winter.

Most of the container stock industry is still sputtering along and probably will until the housing crisis is finally over. There has been some positive signs in this direction however, as there has been more activity from Landscape Architects and developers, so this is a first step in the right direction.

The pot plant industry has continued to do fairly well. The Christmas season went well and most of the poinsettias were sold this year. The nurseries continue to maintain full greenhouses for the spring holidays and this is a good sign.

The landscape contractors remain slow and again the housing situation is thought to be the main cause here. There is a bright note with many Arborists, as they seem to be fairly busy. It must be time to get some of that tree work done that people have been putting off.

The viticulture industry has just had one of the lowest yields seasons in recent memory. Although there was an abundance of rainfall last winter, the overall year had very cool temperatures and the rain in the spring may have affected the berry set. There have been reports from all over the state of a grape harvest that was down from 30-70% depending upon location. In many cases, the grapes did not achieve the sugar concentrations necessary to harvest, or were picked too immature, which will make for some interesting wines. As they say “the 2011 vintage will be lighter and more austere”. Basically lower alcohol and higher acidity in many wines.

Last year was also the beginning of our greater involvement with the strawberry industry. We have begun working on research concerning growing strawberries in the fields without soil fumigants. The organic strawberry industry has been able to accomplish with field rotations, however there is not enough land for the conventional strawberry industry to follow this strategy and has led to the current project. The project is basically attempting to grow strawberries in the fields, but in organic media that is placed into the beds instead of in the soil. This project was already in progress, however was stalled since it was still being managed in an “agricultural” way and not a horticultural method. We are excited about working on this project as it could lead to much safer strawberry growing practices and better for the environment as well.

We hope the economy begins growing and creates many opportunities for all of the horticulture industry.

Best Regards,
Cliff