



Bleasdale Vineyards: Establishing buckwheat as insectaria

Viticulturist:

Marty Smith started planting buckwheat in the mid row three seasons ago to encourage beneficials into the vineyard. Initially Marty had varying results, but has now worked out a good approach to get the best out of his buckwheat plantings.



Langhorne Creek Wine Region

Key observations

Where I have two sowing times, two weeks apart, to keep the flowering period going longer.

When Try and sow the seed as close as possible to budburst, as this will result in the buckwheat flowering at the same time at the vines.

Pitfalls to avoid Buckwheat struggles in hard clays unless there is good soil moisture. It also doesn't like dry hot weather.

Where to from here? Marty will monitor the activity of beneficials in the buckwheat plantings in future seasons.

Case Study

Buckwheat: It needs consistent moisture to establish well, so it needs to be sown when you know a bit of rain is forecast. The buckwheat also needs regular drinks along the way; a few mm of rain every 2 weeks is ideal. We had a relatively dry spring this year (2011/12), and the buckwheat only grew to around 30cm.

What worked well? Buckwheat hates competition. I spray the rows with a CDA sprayer and glyphosate prior to sowing, then direct drill the seed to a depth of 5cm at a rate of 50kg/ha. As it's only sown every 10 rows, the actual seeding rate per/ha is 3kg/ha (seeder width 1.8m on 3m rows).

Buckwheat grows really well in cool climates, or areas with regular rainfall in spring. Buckwheat also grows better on sandy loams and loams.

Two germinations: You can also get two germinations out of buckwheat if you have good spring soil moisture, the buckwheat will grow and set seed. Wait until the seeds have hardened off, a simple test of trying to push your fingernail through the seed.

If the buckwheat is slashed, and then rain follows up, the buckwheat should germinate again and grow until winter. We got the seeds to harden off this year, and we slashed it down. We didn't get any germination in the mid rows again, but where seeds ended up under the drip line, we had a few buckwheat plants germinate which was great.

I only wish it was the only thing that germinated under the drip line!



The Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC) provided funding for this project, through GWRDC Regional - South Australia Central, which incorporates the wine regions of Adelaide Hills, Currency Creek, Kangaroo Island, Langhorne Creek, McLaren Vale and Southern Fleurieu.