

People & Places

# Initiating irrigation goal-dependent for Oregon vineyard managers

OSU researcher speaks during 2022 Grape Day

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Deciding when to start irrigating vineyards each season is a question of economic objectives, says Alec Levin, an assistant professor of viticulture at Oregon State University's Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center.

Everything is a trade-off, Levin explained. Are growers trying to maximize their yields? Or are they willing to sacrifice some yield for a bump in quality, and presumably price?

"Initiating irrigation is an annual management decision," Levin said. "That's why the question is such an important one to answer."

Levin conducted an experiment last year on three vineyard sites in the Rogue Valley of southwest Oregon to provide some clarity on the subject. He presented his findings April 26 during the Oregon Wine Research Institute's annual Grape Day at the OSU campus in Corvallis.

For his trial, Levin and his research team chose sites near Eagle Point, Jacksonville and Ashland, each with differences in elevation, soil type and available moisture in the top meter of soil. They divided each vineyard into



OSU

**Alec Levin has studied how the timing of irrigation impacts the yield and quality of winegrapes.**

rows where irrigation was applied at different starting points ranging from as early as June 1 to as late as Aug. 23.

All grapes received the same rate of irrigation, and all were harvested before the end of September, Levin said.

The starting dates for each irrigation treatment were determined by what is known as "stem water potential," or SWP, a measurement of pressure used to gauge how hard the vines are working to pull water from the ground.

Vines work harder in drier conditions, Levin said, so the longer irrigation is delayed,

the lower the SWI value, which is measured in units known as "bars."

What they found was the longer they waited to turn on water, yields saw a mostly linear reduction of 14-28%. Berry size also decreased by 6-25%.

"The longer you wait, the less yield you'll have. Full stop," Levin said.


However, waiting for certain periods did produce a bump in both sugar content and anthocyanins — compounds that contribute to wine color. They can influence a wine's quality, leading to a higher potential price.

That is where the trade-

off comes into play, Levin said. Starting irrigation earlier means growers can maximize production, though waiting could result in sweeter, deeper-colored wines that fetch more money from consumers.

"If you can get a price premium for improved quality, then it might pay to wait," Levin summarized. "If it doesn't, there is really no economic incentive to do so."

According to Levin's data, vines with an SWP of around minus-7 bars will result in maximum yields. By delaying irrigation and pushing the vines to an SWP of minus-10



**Western Innovator**

**ALEC LEVIN**

**Age:** 36  
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**Education:** Bachelor's degree in psychology, University of Michigan, 2008; doctorate in horticulture and agronomy, University of California-Davis, 2016.

bars, growers can boost sugar content by 0.2% with a 7% yield reduction.

Waiting even longer when the vines have an SWP of minus-12 bars increases wine anthocyanins by 13%, with a yield loss of 15%.

"It's a decision you must make for what you are after," Levin said.

Levin said his team continues to study what other carryover effects the start of irrigation may have on winegrapes, such as the impact on tannins.



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**CORRECTION**

Last week's cover story  
about Cunningham Sheep  
Co. misstated that the  
family has land in Umatilla  
County and parts of Morrow  
and La Grande counties. It  
should have said Umatilla,  
Morrow and Union counties.  
La Grande is the county  
seat of Union County.

The Capital Press regrets  
the error.

**Correction policy**

Accuracy is important to Capital Press  
staff and to our readers.

If you see a misstatement, omission or  
factual error in a headline, story or photo  
caption, please call the Capital Press news  
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email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

We want to publish corrections  
to set the record straight.

## Woman rescued after falling in outhouse trying to get phone



Getty Images

**A Washington state woman was rescued from an outhouse after she fell in while retrieving her cell phone, fire department officials said.**

Associated Press

QUILCENE, Wash. — A woman who accidentally dropped her cellphone into the hole of an outhouse in a national forest and fell in while trying to retrieve it had to be rescued by firefighters in Washington state.

Brinnon Fire Department Chief Tim Manly said the woman, who was at the top of Mount Walker in the Olympic National Forest northwest of Seattle, had been using her

phone when it fell into the toilet recently, the Kitsap Sun reported.

Manly said she disassembled the toilet seat and used dog leashes to try and get the phone and eventually used the leashes to tie herself off as she reached for it. That effort failed and she fell into the toilet headfirst.

"They didn't work very well and in she went," Manly said.

The woman was alone and tried to get out for 10 to 15 minutes. Reunited with her phone, she called 911, Manly said.

Responding firefighters passed her blocks to stand on to reach a harness, which they used to pull her out of the vault. The Brinnon Fire Department said the woman said she was uninjured.

She was washed down and "strongly encouraged to seek medical attention after being exposed to human waste, but she only wanted to leave," the department said.

"I've been doing this for 40 years, and that was a first," Manly said.

### CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

#### WEDNESDAY MAY 11

**Forest Cultivated Shiitake Mushroom Production:** 2:30-6:30 p.m. 78th St. Heritage Farm, 1919 N.E. 78th St., Vancouver, Wash. This two-session course on forest-cultivated shiitake mushroom production. The second session is June 9. Contact: justin.odea@wsu.edu Website: <https://bit.ly/39fet8t>

#### WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY MAY 11-12

**Animal Agriculture Alliance Stakeholder Summit:** Intercontinental at the Plaza, Kansas City, Mo. The summit will share insights into advocacy and consumer and activist trends. Website: <https://animalagalliance.org/>

#### THURSDAY-SATURDAY MAY 12-14

**92nd Washington FFA Convention:** Location to be determined. Join us for the live, in-person 92nd Washington FFA Convention. Website: <https://www.washingtonffa.org/>

#### SATURDAY MAY 14

**Agricultural Pesticide Collection Event:** There will be a free Agricultural Pesticide Collection Event on May 14 in Clackamas, Ore. This is an opportunity for forest landowners, farmers and other commercial and institutional pesticide users to search out their barns, sheds, and basements for old, restricted or unusable pesticides. Participation is free and anonymous, but participants must pre-register for an appointment. Pre-register for the event by May 1 at <https://conservationdistrict.org/>.

#### WEDNESDAY MAY 18

**NRCS-WA Local Work Group Meeting for Puget Sound (online):** 7 p.m. Producers from Thurston, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, King counties and conservation

districts are invited to participate. Local Work Group Meetings are a valuable part of the NRCS planning process, providing an opportunity for local land managers to be part of a collaborative effort to improve natural resources within their area. This year's meeting will be on Zoom: <https://bit.ly/3kjqlIU> Contact: 253-256-6741 or [amy.hendershot@usda.gov](mailto:amy.hendershot@usda.gov)

**Dairy Tech 2022 Conference:** Austin Marriott Downtown, Austin, Texas. Hosted by the International Dairy Foods Association and dairy.com, the conference will focus on the impact of technology and innovation in the industry. Website: <https://www.idfa.org/events/dairytech-conference>

#### FRIDAY MAY 20

**NRCS-WA Local Work Group Meeting for SW Washington (online):** Noon. Producers from Clark, Underwood (Skamania), Lewis County, Cowlitz, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Grays Harbor counties and conservation districts are invited to participate. Local Work Group Meetings are a valuable part of the NRCS planning process, providing an opportunity for local land managers to be part of a collaborative effort to improve natural resources within their area. This year's meeting is on Zoom: <https://bit.ly/3OGiQTD> Contact: 360-557-3282 or [bobette.parsons@usda.gov](mailto:bobette.parsons@usda.gov)

#### TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY MAY 24-25

**Habitat Working for Farmers (online):** 8 a.m.-noon. Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Oregon IPM Center have teamed up to bring you a virtual conference on practices Western farmers are currently using to develop habitats that conserve agricultural biodiversity and their associated benefits. Website: <https://bit.ly/3iflti9>

#### WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY MAY 25-26

**Roots of Resilience Grazing Conference:** Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, Pendleton, Ore. Dave Pratt, a Ranching for Profit emeritus, will kick

off the conference Wednesday morning with "Three Secrets to Increasing Profit," how livestock managers can improve sustainability by improving their financial bottom line. After lunch, Chris Schachtschneider, OSU Extension, will demonstrate low-stress livestock handling in the Happy Canyon Arena. Thursday's events move north to the Gardena School, Touchet, Wash., for a presentation by internationally known soil health expert Nicole Masters. After lunch, the conference moves to Tumac Farms, where there will be a field practical with Masters. Website: <https://rootsofresilience.org/grazing-conference-2022>

#### THURSDAY JUNE 2

**Sustainable Produce Summit:** 1-7:30 p.m. Marriott Desert Springs Resort, Palm Desert, Calif. The summit will focus on sustainability. Website: <https://www.events.farmjournal.com>

#### FRIDAY-SATURDAY JUNE 3-4

**West Coast Produce Expo:** Marriott Desert Springs Resort, Palm Desert, Calif. The expo will focus on marketing and managing risks. Website: <https://www.events.farmjournal.com>

#### WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY JUNE 8-10

**World Pork Expo:** Iowa State Fairgrounds, Des Moines. The world's largest pork industry trade show will feature education, innovation and networking. Website: <https://www.worldpork.org>

#### SUNDAY JUNE 12

**Savor Idaho:** 11:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Idaho Botanical Garden, 2355 N. Old Penitentiary Road, Boise. Idaho Wine Commission event features wineries, other exhibitors. Features wine tasting, activities, food trucks. Attendance periods from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and 3-5:30 p.m. Website: <https://idahowines.org/event/savor-idaho/>

#### TUESDAY-FRIDAY JUNE 14-17

**Agriculture Transportation Coalition Annual Meeting:** Greater Tacoma Convention Center, 1500

Commerce St., Tacoma, Wash. The largest annual gathering of ag shippers sourcing and delivering to foreign markets. Sponsored by the Agriculture Transportation Coalition, the principal voice of agriculture in U.S. transportation policy. Website: <https://agtrans.org/events/>

#### SUNDAY-TUESDAY JUNE 26-28

**Western Governors' Association Annual Meeting:** Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The meeting will focus on public conversations about the most significant issues facing the region. Website: <https://www.westgov.org>

#### JULY 15-31

**California State Fair & Food Festival:** Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento, Calif. The California State Fair is dedicated as a place to celebrate the best the state has to offer in agriculture, technology, and the diversity of its people, traditions, and trends that shape the Golden State's future. Website: <https://cal-expostatetair.com/>

#### MONDAY-TUESDAY AUG. 8-9

**American Lamb Summit:** Michigan State University and East Lansing Marriott East Lansing, Mich. The summit will focus on competitiveness, production and quality of American lamb. Website: <https://www.lambresourcecenter.com>

#### SATURDAY OCT. 1

**Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in White City:** Rogue Transfer and Recycling, 8001 Table Rock Road, White City, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, [kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov) Registration for this event is required by Sept. 16. Website: <https://bit.ly/3FloyFE>

#### SATURDAY OCT. 15

**Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in Roseburg:** Douglas County Fairgrounds, 2110 Frear St., Roseburg, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, [kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov) Registration for this event is required by Sept. 16.

#### TUESDAY OCT. 18

**FIRA USA Agricultural Robotics and Technology Forum:** Fresno Convention Center, Fresno, Calif. The forum focuses on problem solving, decision making and planning for agricultural robotics. Website: <https://www.fira.usa/fira-agtech.com>

#### SATURDAY OCT. 22

**Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in Madras:** Jefferson County Fairgrounds, 2110 Frear St., Madras, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, [kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov) Registration for this event is required by Sept. 16.

#### TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY DEC. 6-7

**Western Governors' Association Winter Meeting:** Phoenix, Ariz. The meeting will focus on public conversations about the most significant issues facing the region. Website: <https://www.westgov.org>