Wine grapes suffering in wet, cold weather

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

Bruce Rominger’s Yolo County wine grapes are, in a word, immature.

So are his processing tomatoes, languishing in a Winters field.

“We’re behind, and things are moving slowly,” Rominger said of his crops. “I’m not happy about this rain recently.”

Wine grape growers in the Sacramento region, along with those tending other perishable crops like cherries and strawberries, are struggling through a series of fluke frosts and hailstorms. The cool, wet spring – for the second year in a row – has delayed growth, increased the threat of some diseases and snarled the harvest, as well as crushing, packing and shipping schedules.

The zany weather is adding to the California wine industry’s headaches, which include depressed prices and a glut of grapes.

Kevin Steward, vineyard manager for Terra d’Oro Winery in Plymouth, is blunt about the effect of frost, snow, hail, rainstorms and cloudy days on some Sierra foothill vineyards.

Read the whole story

Sierra’s Basque sheepherders come to life in book

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

Phillip and Jean Moore Earl became captivated more than 40 years ago by an unique style of folk art found in the aspen groves of the Eastern Sierra.



After years of collecting the artwork cut into aspen trees by Basque sheepherders in the early 20th century, the couple has produced “Basque Aspen Art of the Sierra Nevada,” (Baobab Press, $32.95 paperback), which collects more than 100 images made by copying the raised pictures onto muslin cloth by rubbing with wax or crayon.

The Earls discovered Basque aspen art in 1969 at an exhibit at the University of Nevada, Reno featuring black and white tracings of images on aspen trees. They asked Frances Wallace and Hans Reiss, who had produced those tracings, where to find the trees with the pictures.

With directions in hand, the Earls set off for the Sierra aspen groves. They’ve spent the past 40 years exploring the sites and recording the art using black rubbing wax to put copies of the carvings on cloth. Over the years, they’ve collected more than 130 images.

Read the whole story

Weed warriors teach about invasive species in local watershed

The Truckee River Watershed Council's weed warriors will be leading two weed walks and two weed pulls – the June 18, July 9, June 21 and July 23, respectively.

The Weed Warriors are hoping to bring awareness to the public about invasive weeds in the area and the proper ways to dispose of them.

Weed walks, lead by volunteer weed warriors Annaliese Miller and Kathy Welch, will be in locations where infestations have been confirmed in order to learn about what plants are invasive to this area. The weed pulls, lead by botanist Susan Urie of the U.S. Forest Service, at Boca Hill on June 21 and Stampede on July 23 will show how to properly remove weeds as well as help with the infestation at locations in the Tahoe National Forest.

Invasive weeds are aggressive plants that have been introduced into an area outside of their native range and are dangerous because they out-compete native and other desirable plants. As a result, they reduce land and recreational values, damage water quality, contribute to soil erosion, degrade plant and animal habitat and increase the risk of wildland fire.

Early detection and rapid response is crucial when it comes to the invasive weeds found in the Truckee meadows.

The weed warrior program's goal is to educate the public on how to find, report and properly dispose of invasive weeds. There are two ways to report potential weeds. The first is online, where there is a Report-a-Weed page. The second way is to report on the go. Iphone and Droid users can download the

“What’s Invasive” app. When the reports are received volunteers will be sent to the location to verify the weed and log it in the database, once verified the appropriate agency will be notified to have the infestation taken care of.

Volunteers are needed. If you would like to attend a weed walk or pull, contact the Truckee River Watershed Council at truckeeriverwc.org, or call Andy Otto at (530) 550.8760, ext.3.

For more information on the Weed Warriors or to become a volunteer, go online.

Luxury home market decline affects listings in Lake Tahoe

By Morgan Brennan, Forbes

Home prices around the country have taken another round of beatings lately, with national home values having dropped more than 30 percent now from the 2006 peak. The ultra luxury end of housing has felt those price plunges too, with multi-million dollar homes cutting prices by the millions. One Lake Tahoe estate is even shaving $25 million off its asking price.



Tranquility estate, owned by Tommy Hilfiger co-founder Joel Horowitz, first hit the sale block in 2006. The asking price? A hefty $100 million, crowning it one of the most expensive for sale properties on the U.S. market. Nearly five years later, with no billionaire takers

coming to the closing table, the former CEO is finally slashing that nine figure price tag by 25 percent. It's now asking $75 million.

"He wanted to get in line with what has happened in the real estate market," says Sue Lowe, a Chase International agent who represents the property alongside Chase International CEO, Shari Chase. "He's eager to sell it and he knows that due to the economy, prices have come down and he has to match it."

The estate grounds, once briefly owned by entertainer Wayne Newton, were bought by Horowitz and his wife in 1997. They set to work constructing a luxury home owners' fantasy on the blank land. The result is an opulent 20,000 square foot mansion overlooking Lake Tahoe from 210 acres.

Read the whole story

Students tackle subject matter many adults never deal with

By Kathryn Reed

When students at Mt. Tallac High School graduate a week from day, they will have left behind a collection of work that is compelling and heart-wrenching. The subject matter in many cases deals with issues these teens this early in their lives should not even know exist.

Some of the material delves into issues they are interested in, other subjects hit close to home. The topic can be anything, but most are about a serious subject.



Estefany Flores with her daughter. Photo/Provided

“I decided to make my project on teen pregnancy because I went through a lot of the same experiences I discussed in my project,” explained Estefany Flores. “For example, being confused, feeling alone, feeling sad, and even thinking about having an abortion. I also did this so girls going through this realize that they aren’t alone.”

This is her PowerPoint on teen pregnancy.

Teacher Eileen McEwen has her students make a proposal, research the options and then create a PowerPoint about the subject.

“The PowerPoint project allows them to meet state requirements and have real world skills,” McEwen said.

Besides learning a skill set that will last them a lifetime, part of the project’s goal is to identify a problem and find a solution for it.

“If we don’t find answers, we just have more problems,” McEwen explained.

Jennifer Marroquin had shaken baby syndrome as her topic.

She is one of the Tallac students who has presented her PowerPoint to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board to demonstrate the skills they are learning at the continuation

high school.

Denisse Robles this school year had fetal alcohol syndrome as her topic. It talks about how this is the leading cause of mental retardation for babies born in the United States.

“It shows the wonderful things the (South Lake Tahoe) Women’s Center does,” McEwen said of that PowerPoint. That’s part of the research component – talking to local agencies about what they do to help people with particular problems.

In the process of creating the PowerPoint the students figure out visually what works in terms of using colors, fonts, point sizes, lighting, background, text over photos and other graphic elements.

Music is also integrated into many of the presentations.

They also learn about being able to tell a story, so to speak, through the slides. They must incorporate 500 words of their own writing – not just statistics – into the PowerPoint.

Besides being graded by McEwen, the PowerPoints are subject to peer review by fellow students. And to ensure plagiarism has not occurred, McEwen will run some information through a website that checks for cheating.

Mt. Tallac students graduate June 10 at 11am on the football field at South Tahoe High School.

Trail building day in Genoa

Carson Valley Trails Association is planning a Genoa Foothill Trail Project kick-off celebration and trail building day June 5 at the Eagle Ridge Trailhead, located 1.8 miles north of

Genoa off of Jacks Valley Road on Adams Ranch Road.

An information booth will be set up from 9am-5pm to learn more about the Genoa Foothill Trail Project and pick up a copy of CVTA' Local Trails Guide map.

Trail building volunteers will meet at the Eagle Ridge Trailhead at 9am. Volunteers should bring lunch and water, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, work gloves and sunglasses. Tools and hard hats will be provided.

For more information, go online or call (775) 722.8784.

Number of women-owned businesses increases sharply in Nev.

By Stephanie Veale, Reno Gazette-Journal

The landscape for women business owners has changed drastically since Christine Whitman became an entrepreneur 20 years ago.

In 1991, Whitman, now chief executive and president of logistics company Complemar Partners in New York, led a management buyout of the company she worked for at the time. She said women didn't own many businesses 20 years ago because "very few women were even thinking about doing it. It wasn't part of anyone's expectations.

"Today, I think women assume that they can do it," Whitman said. "There is a different attitude that girls and women are growing up with today than existed when I first started in my

career.”

The number of women-owned businesses in this country has grown 50 percent since 1997 – a growth rate that’s 1.5 times the national average for businesses overall, according to U.S. Census data released in December and analyzed in a recent report from American Express OPEN. Nationally, businesses owned by women number more than 8.1 million.

Read the whole story

Art of winemaking at Sierra Nevada College

Winemaker Stephen Tebb from Robert Craig Winery will discuss the science and art of winemaking from the soil to the glass on June 16 at 6pm at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village (on the campus of Sierra Nevada College).

With an emphasis on mountain-grown fruit, he will discuss how the geology, geography and climate affect the type and style of wine produced. Tebb will go through the various stages of wine production from harvest parameters to fermentation dynamics to cooperage determinations and ultimately bottling considerations.

Guests will also learn how to taste wine like an expert.

Cost is $30. Seating limited to first 80.

To reserve a seat, call (775) 881.7560, ext. 7474 or email lkburns@ucdavis.edu.

Reflections & Rhythms art hike

Trails and Vistas Art Hike on Sept 17. and Sept. 18 celebrates art and the environment at Spooner Lake, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park.

Tours begin every 15 minutes beginning at noon on Saturday and 10am on Sunday.

Tickets are $30. They go on sale July 1 online.

Reflections & Rhythms embodies the creative process and captures the sights, sounds and experience of the transformative art hike.

Participants will walk along a gentle 2.5-mile long trail in groups of up to 30 people, pausing at live music and dance performances, sculptures, poetry readings and innovative artistic expressions along the guided hike.

Nonprofit Trails and Vistas' mission is to create art experiences in nature that inspire environmental awareness.

Dugard describes abduction details in transcripts

Updated: June 2 8:57pm

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Jaycee Lee Dugard described in terrifying detail last fall how Phillip and Nancy Garrido snatched her off the street and whisked her away for 18 years of captivity.

Grand jury transcripts released moments ago recount her secret testimony that was the basis of the guilty pleas the Garridos accepted in April. The transcripts were released at the request of The Sacramento Bee and other media organizations.

Dugard told the El Dorado Grand Jury that the Garridos' car pulled up beside her the morning of June 10, 1991, "and I didn't think it was weird at the time, but it pulled in kind of close to me. And I thought he was going to ask for directions because he started to say something."

Instead, Dugard said she suddenly felt a shock and fell into bushes, the apparent result of the Garridos using a Taser on her and dragging her into their car.

Read the whole story

Here are the transcripts:

Transcript-1

Transcript-2

Transcript-3

Transcript-4

Transcript-5