Spectacular growth – vines planted in July 2003 reached 2 metres in height by mid-January 2004 – a multimillion dollar development

As Riverus’s viticulturist, I’m asked repeatedly to visit clients’ vineyards, particularly during the early stages of planting and development. On a recent visit to Te Awanga Estate and Winery Limited in Hawke’s Bay, I was delighted to encounter a young vineyard in absolutely peak condition – quality materials, sturdy vines, and phenomenal growth.

Under the direction of Dr. Greg Beacham and vineyard manager Denis Green, Te Awanga is in full swing.utterly impressive, but the attention to detail has already apparent in every aspect of the development. Achievements like this deserve to be celebrated; they can also provide a useful case study to help other growers in their efforts. Dr. Beacham is the first to admit that his role as managing director at Te Awanga is a new one. Besides running his medical practice, the physician also owns a specialty car restoration business in Havelock North, and it was through that channel that he met the German investor behind Te Awanga Estate & Winery. “He visited the area while one of his cousins was visiting from Germany,” he explains. “It’s a case of one small business attracting more investment to the region.”

The investment is sizable – a multimillion dollar development comprising a 25-hectare vineyard, 400-tonne capacity winery and a luxury restaurant with panoramic views. “My principal in Germany wanted someone in this area he could trust,” continues Dr. Beacham. “We’ve worked with the best in the business to ensure this development is successful.”

In addition to Riverus, which supplied all the grafted vines, Te Awanga Estate & Winery has gathered together what it considers the top team in the country to manage the project, including noted viticultural consultant Dr. David Jordan, architect John Blair, and winemaker John Belsham, who is providing technical advice on the winery (which will begin construction in 2005). The vineyard itself is under the capable care of Denis Green. Starting at age 15, Mr. Green ran his parents’ vineyard before spending nine and a half years at Te Mata Estate, followed by another four and a half years as the main hand at Delegat’s Hawke’s Bay operation. Self-described perfectionist, Dr. Beacham and Mr. Green clearly enjoy their work and what they’ve achieved to date. In 2002, all they had to start out with was their investor’s request for a block of land near the sea and with some elevation. Te Awanga was the area of choice – along with a requirement for a relatively frost-free area. According to Dr. Beacham, it was “a stroke of luck” that enabled the purchase of a former deer farm and its million-dollar view of Cape Kidnappers and the sea.

In addition, their brief was to create a showcase vineyard at the highest standard. The vineyard will be managed organically, an approach pushed by Dr. Beacham. “Spectacular growth – vines planted in July 2003 reached 2 metres in height by mid-January 2004 – a multimillion dollar development

A wet winter delayed planting until July 2003, with the last plants in the ground in August. In this same two-month period, posts and trellising were installed, along with the computer-controlled trickle irrigation system. Initially, all vines were machine planted. Several months later, when it became clear that a small block of vines was not thriving to the same degree as its neighbours, we found that some of the plants had been planted with insufficient space for proper root growth. Mr. Green immediately called the contractor who replanted the problem area by hand, and establishment proceeded without further problems.

In all, 52,899 vines were planted. Rows are 2.2 metres apart, vines 1.8 metres apart, with 4 plants per bay. The plantings are designed to complement the position of the restaurant, which will take place later this year when vines become available, will be in Cabernet Franc and Viognier.

Once the site had been selected, the entire property was surveyed, and then a programme of contouring and shaping the land began – including filling in a small valley and making a hillside symmetrical. Heavy machinery with rippers and a plough, cleared the whole site to even things up, and the ergonomics of row layout were carefully considered. A block of land at the front of where the restaurant will be built, enabling diners to look down the rows all the way to Cape Kidnappers. Quality Beacham indicates by choosing top performers at every stage, soils were sampled and throughout the vineyard to keep them green year round and promote a tight turf. Planting of a high-density grass through the alleyways began this autumn. Considerable research also went into the local soils and their drainage properties. The shingle soils at the front of the vineyard drain well. The remaining soils, which are waipakura and okawa loam, had pan which had to be ripped to a depth of one metre with a D王府机. The property was subsoil drained to catch a rising water table in a w-s, “In fact, 2003 was a wet winter, so it helped identify wet areas and drain them into the main system,” continues Dr. Beacham. “There are several sumps into the shingle as well.”

Throughout the soil preparation stage, soils were sampled and laboratory tested, after which the appropriate fertilisers were applied. Although there was some evidence of grass grubs, Dr. Beacham indicates that after the soil was ripped, the sea birds took care of the pests.

A two-pronged approach has been taken. Mr. Green chose 900 mm Green Grow rigid heaving of four levels from the surface down to a depth of one metre. Fertilisation is carried out as necessary, based on soil and plant sample results.

On the Vine

**Timetable at Te Awanga Estate & Winery Limited**

- **2002**
  - Site search and initial planning
  - Site acquisition, with 25 hectares allocated to vineyard
- **2003**
  - February – and preparation begins
  - July to August – planting, trellising and irrigation completed
  - Vines exceed two metres’ growth by mid-January
- **2004**
  - Plan to take first crop
  - Construction to begin on winery and restaurant

**For more information on how to get the best start for your vineyard, contact Nick Hoskins on 027 248 7724**

**Te Awanga Estate & Winery Ltd** enjoys a “million-dollar view” of Cape Kidnappers and the sea. A wet winter delayed planting until July 2003, with the last plants in the ground in August. In this same two-month period, posts and trellising were installed, along with the computer-controlled trickle irrigation system. Initially, all vines were machine planted. Several months later, when it became clear that a small block of vines was not thriving to the same degree as its neighbours, we found that some of the plants had been planted with insufficient space for proper root growth. Mr. Green immediately called the contractor who replanted the problem area by hand, and establishment proceeded without further problems.

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