

Although local grape growers are experiencing late ripening crops, Sal Captain of Captain Vineyards in Moraga who farms 3500 vines, the largest amount in Lamorinda, told me that production this year is better than when the season started. His wife, Susan Captain, is the President of LWGA. One of the missions of the organization is to increase resident membership as well as have Lamorinda designated as an American Viticultural Area (AVA). Prominent appellations add value and eminence in wine circles.

The varietals grown throughout Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga span the French Bordeaux area with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Merlot to the Rhone regions' Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, and Viognier. Burgundy is represented by the Pinot Noir grape and Lamorindans also grow small amounts of Sangiovese and Chardonnay. The smallest LWGA member grower tends 20 vines. Numerous amateur gardeners dabble in viticulture and could benefit from becoming a member of a lively grass roots wine region development. Despite the small quantity of bunches, growers talk about the great expectation of a high quality wine production. Will 2011 become known as collectible vintage year?

Last year at this time, I was privileged to visit the gardens of Giverny and the vineyards of the Loire. The wisdom I have savored since growing up in a wine area and living in France as a student at the University of Bordeaux is that gardening and grapes meld cultures, break barriers, and entertain conversation and connection.

Fall is upon us as the harvest days begin. Naturally there is more to do in the autumn garden besides tend to our vineyards, even if you never met a glass of wine you didn't enjoy!

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Loire Valley grapes hang on a trellis.

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