

Update on Heritage Zinfandel Selections at FPS

by Nancy Sweet , Foundation Plant Services

ZINFANDEL ADVOCATES AND PRODUCERS (ZAP) and Dr. Jim Wolpert, Viticulture Extension Specialist at the University of California, Davis, have agreed to release to the public grape collection all Zinfandel Heritage Project selections previously brought to FPS. Twenty heritage clones have attained foundation stock status in the California Grapevine Registration & Certification (R&C) Program. Mist-propagated plants (MPPs) may be available for distribution from FPS to R&C participating nurseries as soon as spring 2009.

The Zinfandel Heritage Project was initiated in the 1990's to preserve germplasm from historical California Zinfandel clones for the benefit of the public. The effort was directed by Wolpert and funded by ZAP, a trade association of producers and consumers of Zinfandel wine.

The Zinfandel Heritage Project team collected Zinfandel clones from vineyards planted before 1930. The team wanted the collection to represent as wide a geographic range as possible; when complete, the collection represented fourteen California counties from San Bernardino to Mendocino. The team also specifically sought vines with loose clusters and small berries.

Sixty-three selections were budded onto rootstock at a research vineyard at UC's Oakville Station in 1995-96. Twenty-two additional selections were added in 1999. The intent of the Phase 1 research in the Zinfandel Heritage Project was to do initial screening of the clones and preserve the clonal material. Although this stage of the research did not involve replicated trials, data describing juice chemistry as well as vegetative and reproductive growth were collected from each of the selections for six years.

Foundation Plant Services donated disease testing and elimination treatment services to the Zinfandel Heritage Project. Budwood from 20 of the Zinfandel Heritage Project vines was sent to FPS starting at the beginning of the project under code names to commence the registration and certification process. The selections arrived in three groups—1991, 1997, and 2001—and were screened for virus.

Ten of the heritage selections were not required to undergo virus elimination therapy. The remaining ten selections underwent shoot tip tissue culture treatment after virus testing. It is expected that all twenty heritage Zinfandel selections will attain registered or provisional status by the time the FPS list of Registered Grape Selections for the 2008-2009 Dormant Season is released in January 2009.

ZAP and Wolpert advanced 18 heritage selections and 4 standard UC selections (Zinfandel FPS 02 and 03 and Primitivo FPS 03 and 06) to Phase 2 trials in the Zinfandel Heritage Project. The Phase 2 research was set up as a replicated trial, allowing for more meaningful data collection. FPS received the majority of its Heritage Zinfandel selections early in the project, so few of the selections are in the Phase 2 trial at Oakville.

In Phase 2, the decision was made to increase the plot size and vine number per selection to make larger, more representative wine lots. Three years of research wine (2006-2008) was made by Ravenswood Winery and evaluated. Performance data was also accumulated in this phase.

Planning for Phase 3 of the Zinfandel Heritage Project is currently in progress. Cuttings have been taken from FPS' Foundation Vineyard for a future ZAP clonal research study to be administered by Wolpert. This phase of the project will yield data relative to the selections featured at FPS. The purpose of Phase 3 research is to evaluate how *terroir* (site conditions) affects the performance of each heritage selection.

ZAP and Wolpert are in the process of identifying 'grower-cooperators' to establish the Zinfandel Heritage selections in diverse locations throughout California. They are looking for ideal research sites with uniform soil and adequate size.

The Zinfandel Heritage Project selections at FPS will be available to the public five years after they are released to Wolpert and ZAP. However, MPPs of the selections may be made available to R&C Program participating nurseries as soon as spring 2009.

The original source of each Zinfandel Heritage Project selection will remain confidential for the present time. ZAP and Wolpert do not want undue influence placed on association with a place name or winery over actual performance and wine research results. They encourage selection of clones based on performance in replicated trials.

For more information on the Zinfandel variety, visit [iv.ucdavis.edu](http://ucdavis.edu) or the 2007 FPS Grape Program Newsletter article 'The Zinfandels of FPS' at <http://fps.ucdavis.edu/WebSitePDFs/Newsletters&Publications/GrapeNewsletter-Nov2007.pdf>. 