

BREAKING Grape growers report early Napa County bud break

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BREAKING TOP STORY

Wine industry

Grape growers report early Napa County bud break

Henry Lutz 22 min ago



Buds break on vines in the Carneros region in southern Napa County, kicking off the 2018 growing season.

Brittany Pederson, Renteria Vineyard Management

The year's first signs of life have come to Napa Valley vineyards, marking an exceptionally early start to the grape growing season here.

The Napa Valley Grapegrowers announced Thursday that bud break, the first stage of vine growth wherein vines emerge from their winter dormancy and begin to produce shoots that will one day bear grapes, has begun in areas like the southern Carneros region. Vines in the area are typically the first in Napa County to begin the growing season and are among the first to be harvested each year.

Ushered in by a weeks-long bout of unseasonably warm and dry weather, this year's bud break launches the growing season roughly two weeks earlier than 2017's season, according to Garrett Buckland, president of the Napa Valley Grapegrowers, in an announcement from the group.

Buckland noted that in addition to the warmer climes of the past weeks, replantings have also taken place in vineyards throughout the county over the last several years, resulting in younger vines that tend to undergo bud break earlier.

As usual, white varietals like Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are among those whose buds have broken first, said Brittany Pederson, viticulturist with Renteria Vineyard Management.

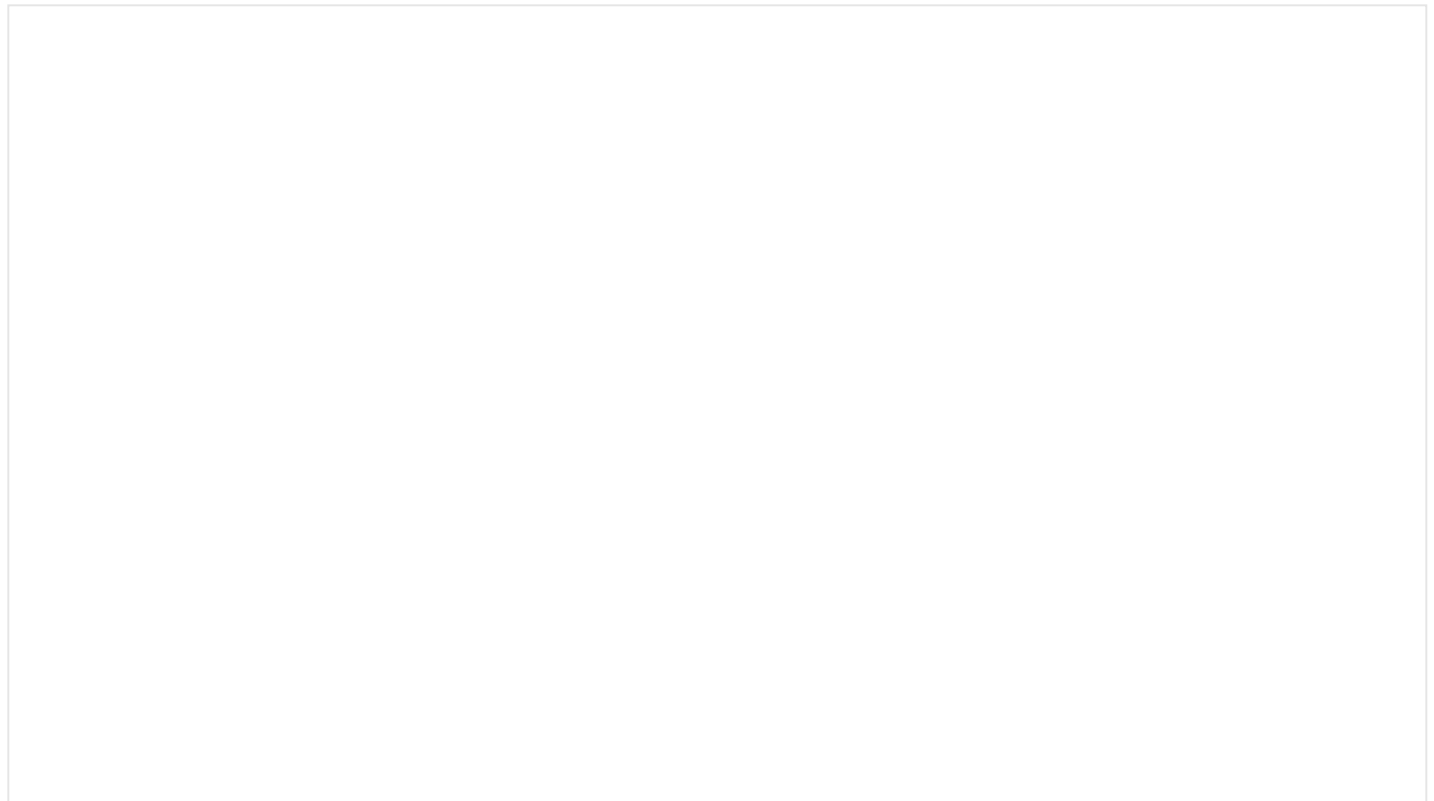
Pederson added that a cold front is expected in the coming days, "which will slow down bud break; however, it's already started in some locations."

A start to the growing season this early can be cause for concern among growers, as the buds that have broken thus far are now susceptible to damage from frost or rain.

In its release, the Grapegrowers noted the weather alert system the group offers its members via text and voice messages. The system is currently on frost watch, the group said, and tracking nighttime temperatures.

Per the threat of frost, Buckland said that growers are maintaining cover crops, including mustard, which is currently blooming throughout the region, and are "making sure to keep it mowed as a preventative frost protection measure."

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Henry Lutz

Wine Reporter / Copy Editor

Henry Lutz covers the local wine industry. He has been a reporter and copy editor for the Register since 2016.

