

Delay in warm weather means a late wine grape harvest

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

September traditionally ushers in a key time for California's multibillion-dollar wine industry. It's the month when the state's grape harvest hits high gear, and for the past seven years, September has simultaneously been proclaimed California Wine Month by the governor.

But where are all the ripe grapes? 2011's growing season has been hampered by unseasonably cool temperatures and a wet spring, delaying the grape harvest by a few weeks compared with a typical year.

Lodi's looking at an overall light crop, with a little pinot grigio and chardonnay just starting to be picked.

"We're starting about three weeks late, but the weather's been ideal, and I think steadily we'll catch up," said Mark Chandler, executive director of the Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission. "The quality looks excellent with the warm afternoons and cool evenings."

The same just about goes for the Sierra Foothills. Paul Bush, the co-owner of Madroña in El Dorado County, says he doesn't expect the bulk of his grape crops to be harvested until late September.

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