

Wine grapes take a pounding with latest rain

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

Local wine grape growers were dealt a double whammy Monday when an unexpected rain doused harvest plans for the second time in days, lowering sugars in fruit and jamming area wineries. If rain continues this week, growers could lose grapes to deterioration in the vineyards.

The unseasonable showers also hurt regional tomato and rice growers.

Grape growers in the foothills and Delta area were hoping for sun and breezes this week to erase the effects of back-to-back, early rains. While much of the fruit for white wines has been picked and sent to the wineries, a rainstorm last Wednesday and Thursday stalled harvest of red varieties, including cabernet sauvignon, syrah and merlot.

The rain also lowered sugar content in grapes in the vineyards, the result of water dilution in fruit. Growers opted to leave fruit on the vines for a few days to build up sugar content, but were taken aback to see raindrops in their vineyards Monday morning.

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