

### *The Vilafonté Philosophy of Wine Growing:*

The vineyard is designed to have a low production of grapes per vine, yet maintain an economically attractive yield per hectare due to the high vine density per hectare. This has the multiple attraction of quicker and more even ripening and lower requirements for each vine; which facilitates high concentration and intensity of flavor.

Water management employs local station evapotranspiration (ET) monitoring, Leaf Water Potential measurements and a visual evaluation of shoot growth on our 5 point vine shoot tip and canopy evaluation index. The gravelly soils of the site coupled with the drain tiles and high density vine planting allow for early-season control of vine vegetative growth due to depletion of the winter-stored soil water. Drip irrigation is critical to management of the controlled-deficit water management to maintain vine physiological function while managing the timing of water-induced stress signals for vine and fruit ripening.

Very early season shoot removal is employed to achieve early opening of the canopies for better light and air movement which facilitates the preservation of bud fertility and the ease of spray penetration.

Severe thinning of fruit is permitted by the high fertility of the vines, the high vine density per hectare and thus allows the removal of any clusters on inferior length shoots. Verasion thinning at 85% color change and then again at the end of the verasion period further contributes to the uniformity of fruit ripening that we are seeking.

Current experience shows that our phenology stages of flowering to verasion and verasion to harvest are at approximately 103 to 105 days for Merlot and 105 to 110 days for Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec at harvest sugar readings of 24.5 Brix or slightly greater.