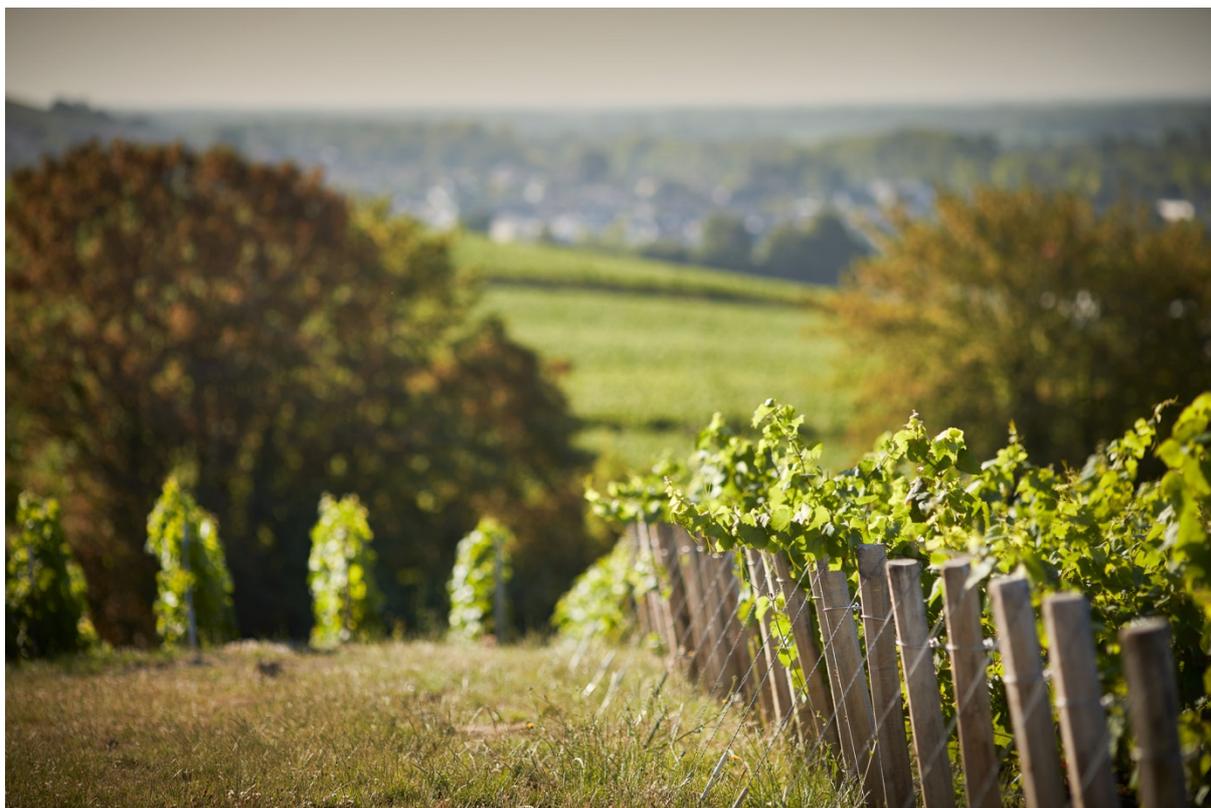


Champagne Deutz Vineyards *Flowering 2021*



After what was a rather unsettled spring, the weather appears to be back on track. Every year is indeed different although we seem to be returning to a growth dynamic and rhythm of work closer to what we were accustomed to. The scorching temperatures in week 24 have given a boost to vegetation and we can be sure of one thing and that's that we won't be harvesting in August this year.

The particularly early harvest of last year left us with a long autumn which we devoted to trellising work in the newly planted plots of vines. The vine's premature 'shedding' of its grapes combined with the late falling of the leaves constituted sufficient water reserves despite the lack of rainfall in September. The vine was therefore well prepared for its winter rest.

For several years we have also used the autumn period for surveys and planning. This includes identifying and pulling up vine stocks suffering from wood disease and also, although only more recently, from grapevine yellows disease caused by phytoplasma (flavescence dorée and bois noir).

From November onwards the growers are usually kept busy with pruning work which continues right through until the end of March.

The weather conditions during the autumn and winter of 2020/2021 were humid and mild and overall in line with the average in recent years. Just a few continental cold spells in February served as a reminder that we were indeed still in winter. Carrying out mechanical work in such conditions isn't easy and it was not until the second half of February that we were able to make any progress with the grinding up of the vine branches and begin the ploughing work.

It was the temperatures in March that determined the dates of the budburst. They were on the lower side of average which led to a staggered budburst on 13, 20 and 23 April respectively for our Chardonnays, Pinots Noirs and Meuniers. At this stage, we were slightly behind the 10-year average.

April brought us glorious sunny days and icy cold nights with some frosts which continued into early May. We, like many other vineyard owners, were not spared the effects of the frosts and the damages were significantly heterogeneous depending on the area. The damage amounted to around 10% of all buds in our vineyards with our two-year-old vines being the most severely impacted.

May was particularly cold and rainy, the vine struggled to grow and began to stagnate. The pests that feed on the vine, which are generally secondary pests, were able to devour the slowly evolving buds at their leisure this year and therefore had the opportunity to cause more damage than usual.

It was not until early June that the temperatures began to rise and we actually saw higher than average temperatures during this period. The vine, stressed by the weather conditions throughout May, was finally getting its colour back and growing more steadily. Tying work began on 8 June (compared to the 15 May last year!). This three-week contrast with 2020 heightened the impression of lateness although we were actually only ten days behind a 'normal' year.

The rise in temperatures unfortunately brought heavy storms which caused severe damage to the vines. Hail struck certain parts of our wine region although we ourselves were fortunately spared, much to our relief. The hot and humid weather nonetheless had us fearing the onset of vine disease.

The first flowers appeared on 3 June. Temperatures remained high which resulted in an even flowering across the board for our Chardonnays on 14 June followed by our Pinot Noirs on 15 June and our Meuniers on 18 June. The high temperatures enabled flowering to take place quickly and in good conditions which bodes well for the harvest!

If we take 88 days between flowering and harvesting (we've been under the famous 90-day rule in recent years and well below the 100-day mark that was commonplace in the 70s and 80s!) then we can expect to harvest on around 15 September. We will have more time to prepare for the harvest this year!

The region's more experienced winemakers can often be heard speaking of 'sowing much but harvesting little' and the disrupted start to the growing cycle (with frosts, below-average temperatures, storms and hail) does indeed suggest that they are right. All we can do now is hope that the rest of the year will eventually prove them wrong. In the meantime, we shall be staying on our guard as the harvest is still a while off and Mother Nature has a habit of being unpredictable!