
Oregon Wine Board Documents

Oregon Wine Board (OWB) Collection

11-5-2008

2008 Oregon Harvest Report

Oregon Wine Board

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/owha_owb



Part of the [Viticulture and Oenology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Oregon Wine Board, "2008 Oregon Harvest Report" (2008). *Oregon Wine Board Documents*. Report. Submission 54.

https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/owha_owb/54

This Report is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield, with permission from the rights-holder(s). Your use of this Report must comply with the [Terms of Use](#) for material posted in DigitalCommons@Linfield, or with other stated terms (such as a Creative Commons license) indicated in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, or if you have questions about permitted uses, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

2008 OREGON HARVEST REPORT

Late start and extended cool growing season gave way to dry, mild conditions at harvest; lower yields deliver mature, complex flavors that have growers and winemakers thrilled with potential of vintage

PORTLAND, November 5, 2008 – Oregon's 2008 growing season started late, with bud break on average ten days to two weeks behind schedule followed by a cool growing season and harvest that extended through the end of October. Concerned that the grapes might not reach full ripeness, growers further thinned crop later in the season. In the northern part of the state, small berry clusters left to hang on the vine throughout the extended warm spell in October achieved optimal maturity, with full ripeness, and exhibit intensely concentrated color and flavors. In Southern and Eastern Oregon, a late season freeze affected some vineyards, but fruit brought in before the freeze shows concentration and mature flavors, and protected vineyards were unharmed. With lower yields, but fully ripe, high quality fruit, 2008 is a harvest that growers and winemakers alike say has the potential to produce extraordinary wines.

"This is the kind of harvest our friend David Lett would have loved," said Jesse Lange of Lange Estate. "Late in the year. Cool, fresh and dry with perfect fruit, even ripeness and flavors that will blow your mind. What a great tribute to Papa Pinot."

"I am extremely excited and very tired," said Sam Tannahill, executive winemaker for A to Z Wineworks, Rex Hill Vineyards and Francis Tannahill in the Willamette Valley and who sources grapes from throughout the state. "To be here at the 28th of October with fruit still coming in is nuts, but the fruit looks really great. We must preserve what we've been given, which is a very special opportunity and a very lucky chance. This is perhaps the best harvest we've had since 1999. I'm not really fond of or prone to exaggeration but across the board, there is the potential for a tremendous quality vintage."

According to Greg Jones, a climatologist at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Oregon who monitors conditions throughout the state's winegrowing regions, a relatively cold late winter evolved into a very cool spring with March and April temperatures across the state anywhere from two to four degrees below normal. The vines showed bud break dates that ranged from two to over four weeks late. Just as the vines were getting started in full growth, May followed with a ten day spell of extreme heat with days as much as 20-25 degrees above normal. June through September followed with wider than normal swings between warm and cool periods. In the Willamette Valley, warm weather arrived in early October after a few days of rain showers that did not negatively affect the grapes, allowing the fruit to slowly ripen, mature and develop complex flavors with great acidity.

Some areas in Southern Oregon, the Columbia Gorge and Eastern Oregon contended with a short frost event between October 9-12, but in most instances were able to achieve ripe fruit before the frost; or if unaffected by the frost, benefitted from three weeks of warm weather following the frost event.

Across the state, lower crop loads and berries showing lower sugar levels but full physiological development have the potential to deliver balanced, complex wines at lower alcohol levels that will age well.

"In 2008, Oregon's grape growers and winemakers will be rewarded for their commitment to farming in this unique growing region," said Ted Farthing, executive director of the Oregon Wine Board. "We're thrilled that wine lovers will experience classically complex, balanced and ageable wines thanks to the gorgeous fruit Mother Nature provided us. She's not often this generous."

REGIONAL HARVEST OVERVIEWS

Willamette Valley

Quality not quantity reigned in the Valley, with yields on average 10 to 20 percent down. Early rain events in October showed no negative effect, and fruit is generally pristine with concentrated flavors, elegance and balance.

Amy Wesselman, owner, Westrey Wine Company

“The weather in the 2008 growing season was dramatic, similar to 1999. Bud break and bloom were late and this caused much concern going into the harvest season. As in 1999, a beautiful Oregon autumn saved the day, with sunny days and cool nights combining to produce fruit of great richness, complexity and depth.”

Harry Peterson-Nedry, owner/winemaker, Chehalem

“Quality in the Willamette Valley seems very good, with low alcohols (13-13 ½ percent), balanced acids, great flavors and mature polyphenolics,” said Harry Peterson-Nedry, owner/winemaker at Chehalem in the Willamette Valley. “Pinot noir flavors, aromas and colors are deep and rich, but with brightness from moderately high acids. Whites have ripeness also with dancing acids, so very nice balance should materialize. Later harvested fruit is especially ripe, so blended wines from several sites will be excellent. The quality of Riesling and later harvested Chardonnay is exceptionally good, with ripeness, great flavors and perfect, healthy botrytis (on the Riesling). The last Pinot noir vineyards' fruit qualities are hard to imagine being better, with impeccable health, ripeness but with great acid, deep flavors and colors reflecting a cubic depth and intensity.”

“Although it is dangerous to draw parallels or predict quality levels at this stage, I have been struck by the coolness and lateness similarities of 2008 to two of my favorite vintages, 1993 and 1999. We're conservatively excited right now.”

Ken Wright, owner/winemaker, Ken Wright Cellars

“This year, the fall was remarkable. What we do farming wise makes a big difference – from thinning to shoot positioning and soil amendments – but there is no substitute for great weather. The early rainfall put sugars back in balance with flavors. The fruit needs nothing. It's so perfectly balanced naturally that we do not have to do anything in the winery to alter what we've received.”

Adam Campbell, winemaker, Elk Cove Vineyards

Campbell reports, “With our late flowering this year, I thought it was important to aggressively thin all vineyards to concentrate remaining fruit and speed up ripening.” This approach to aggressive vine management helped ward off disease pressure, even as early October saw a rainy spell. Campbell notes, “The weather after the early October rain stayed relatively cool and prevented any major outbreaks. We were also able to ward off disease pressure due to our lower yields and intensive vine management program. We had to gut it out through those early October rains and were rewarded for it,” added Campbell. “The sunny days with cold nights in October are just what we needed to bring in perfectly ripe fruit with great acidity. 2008 should be classic cool climate Oregon Pinot noir. Ripe fruit, great color, huge potential.”

Michael Stevenson, winemaker, Panther Creek Cellars

“My initial impressions are classically styled and very balanced wines. I love the fact that we achieved phenolic ripeness without excessive alcohols. Fruit aromas and flavors are bright and fresh. Colors are

dramatic but not in terms of being dark or light. They are vibrant and gorgeous, almost electric in their impact.”

Jason Tosch, vineyard manager, Anne Amie Vineyards

“This is what you dream of. Some of the best wines the state can produce will be coming out of this vintage – wines with lift, ripe characters in the skins, and acids and pH in balance. We were initially on edge about the rain setting in and not getting what we needed, but the weather kept getting better and better. We just had to know that the vine would somehow balance itself out and deliver what we needed.”

Ryan Harms, winemaker, Kings Ridge Wines

“The best thing we could have right now is a solid vintage that everyone is excited about and will showcase the best of what Oregon has to offer. The acidity in the wines is pretty exciting – they will offer freshness. We will get flavors without the commensurate alcohols and good tannins in the wine.”

Columbia Gorge

This year showed the advantages of microclimates in the Columbia Gorge, as warm and cool climate varieties thrived. The affect of early October's frost depended on the sites' aspects and slopes. Although bud break was later than normal, nature evened things out and by the end of harvest consensus seems positive.

Robb Bell, owner, Cathedral Ridge Winery

Bell works with a multitude of varieties and started his harvest at the end of September and projected to finish by early November. “This harvest taught me the resiliency of the vineyards. They were late, but they caught up, and the finish was better than everyone thought. We were blessed with warm weather, yet acids are still going strong.”

Robert Morus, owner, Phelps Creek Vineyard

With later bud break, early apprehension about this year's harvest quickly turned positive with the warm autumn weather. Morus notes, “Despite all the talk about the late season, I felt that September was such a gorgeous month that we ended up picking right on schedule. It wasn't really a late season for us. There was a little variation when rain came through at the start of harvest, but then the balance of October has been really beautiful. Fruit tones are very nice this year. Color is excellent, possibly because berry size is smaller, but color extraction has been notable.”

Southern Oregon (Umpqua, Rogue and Applegate Valleys)

Like other wine regions in Oregon, the growing season in Southern Oregon started off with a cool spring and delayed bud break. Temperatures remained relatively moderate throughout summer, with little rainfall and warm, sunny days prevailing. After a frost event in early October the remainder of the month remained dry and warm, allowing for adequate hang time for the vineyards that were unaffected by frost.

Gus Janeway, winemaker, RoxyAnn Winery

Janeway works on a number of sites throughout Southern Oregon and commented, “moderate temperatures in general allowed for a fairly relaxed pace of ripening. A brief rain at the end of September brought some much needed moisture to help the vines finish ripening their fruit. Most

fruit was ripe prior to the freeze in the second week of October, which wiped out the canopy in many low-lying vineyards, but left intact hillside vineyards and those with good frost protection. From sites that harvested before the freeze or were frost free, the elements seem to be there for a vintage emphasizing elegance, complexity and good concentration. These may be wines noted more for their longevity, character and finesse than for obvious power.”

Lee Mankin, owner and operator, Carpenter Hill Vineyard and Coleman Creek Vineyard

“The year started off with cool spring weather which delayed bud break and subsequent flowering by almost three weeks. However, as we went through summer, the growing conditions were ideal. He noted, “veraison lasted only a week. With the fastest veraison time I can remember and the ideal growing conditions, the fruit development had caught up by the end of August.”

Commenting on the freeze in early October, Mankin said, “sites with heavy yields and cooler weather were compromised, which may reduce overall yields by 10 – 15 percent for Southern Oregon.”

Laura Lotspeich, partner, Trium Wines

In some areas the early October frost left a lasting impact, and in other areas the threat of frost was mitigated by site and wind machines. Lotspeich notes, “This will be a year for some winemakers and vineyards to shine. There may be some challenges, but this can result in some spectacular wines with unusual components. Growers that were on the ball in the late spring and adjusted crop loads in anticipation of a short season have provided winemakers with some great fruit to work with.”

Pat Spangler, owner/winemaker, Spangler Vineyards

“Fruit set this year seemed to be slightly lower than average. Everything that I saw that was not hit by frost, and I travel a lot around the area, was able to achieve full ripeness. Very good flavor profiles. I think we’ll have some phenomenal wines. The extra sunshine in September and October really brought out the flavors. For example, the Cabernet Franc is spectacular and the later ripening cycle brought out its spice notes.”

Don Moore, owner, Quail Run Vineyard

“Our total crop is down 20-30 percent due to cool weather at bloom and that’s average for growers in this area. Quality is very high and we were able to ripen all grapes to our satisfaction with exceptional flavors. Rhone varieties like Syrah, Viognier, Grenache, Marsanne, and Roussane will shine, plus Malbec and Cabernet franc.”

Eastern Oregon (Columbia Valley and Walla Walla Valley)

A number of varieties are grown in this expansive region and there are a variety of microclimates depending on site. Like other parts of the state, both regions experienced later bud break and a frost event in early October, but the weather recovered and remained mild and dry through the rest of harvest supporting typical brix levels and good acidity.

Casey McClellan, owner/winemaker, Seven Hills Winery

McClellan stated he could not remember a smoother harvest in 20 years adding, “this was a well paced vintage in which we were able to devote all the time desired to making each lot the best it could be. The timing of each sub-region and microclimate allowed an optimal use of fermentor space and manpower. It was a late season, so we faced some pressure from frost and cooler nights and mornings slowing down ripening in the cooler areas. However, in the end, we achieved our typical brix

levels and color development, with the added advantage of very good acidities. Tannins are likely to be softer than hotter years.”

Chris Banek, Senior Viticulturist, Seven Hills Vineyard and SeVein Vineyards

“Harvest started for us on September 15, which is close to normal, but finished on October 23, which is later than usual. Yields were normal to higher, but cluster and berry sizes were average to smaller this year. Harvest weather was great this year and in turn the fruit is in good shape.

To be true, both growers and winemakers will work hard to make this vintage special and I think time is the true test. We can talk about what we think until we are blue in the face, but the people who drink the wine will finish the story.”

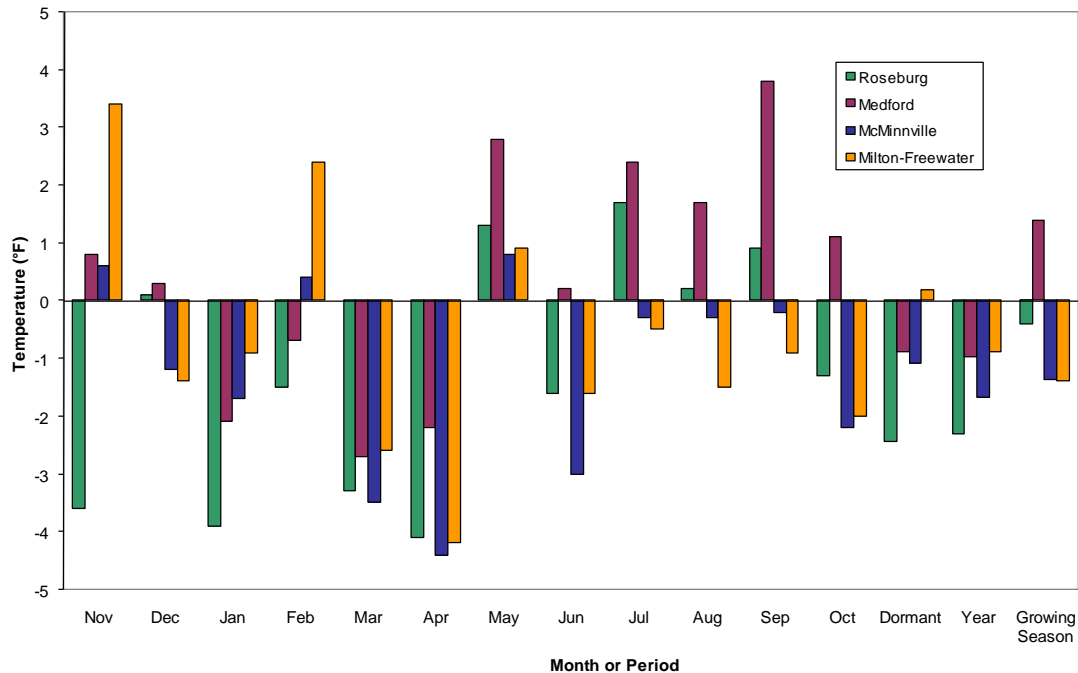
About the Oregon Wine Board

The Oregon Wine Board is a semi-independent state agency that manages marketing, research and education initiatives that support and advance the Oregon wine and wine grape industries. The Board represents more than 370 wineries, 300 independent growers and 17,000 vineyard acres throughout the state’s diverse winegrowing regions. The Oregon wine industry is a leader in sustainable viticulture. Oregon vineyards and wineries contribute to \$1.4 billion of economic activity in the state, as well as at least 8,479 wine-related jobs and \$203 million in wages annually. For more information, visit www.oregonwine.org.

HARVEST DATA

Below you will find information on the 2008 growing season in four representative sites throughout Oregon: McMinnville, Milton-Freewater, Roseburg and Medford. Data includes 1-2) temperature and precipitation departures from normal; 3) temperature and rainfall averages; 4) cumulative degree days. *Data courtesy Dr. Greg Jones, Southern Oregon University.*

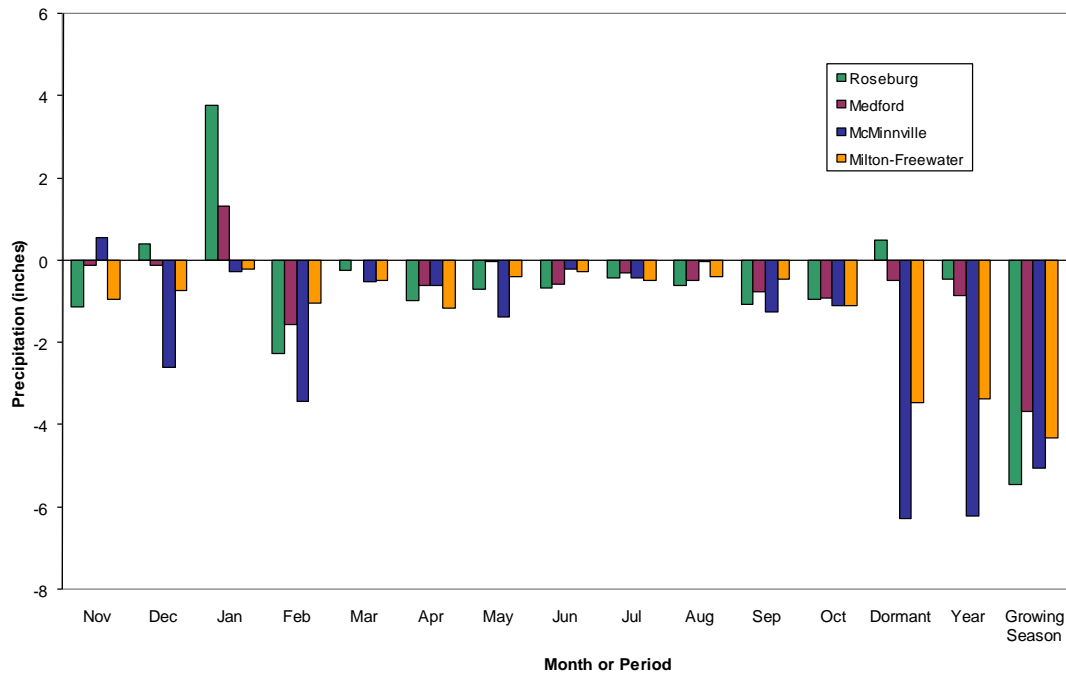
Seasonal and Monthly Temperature Departures from Normal



This chart represents a summation of daily temperature departures by month, the dormant period (Nov-Mar), the year (Jan-Oct), and the growing season (Apr-Oct) from the NWS stations (www.noaa.gov)

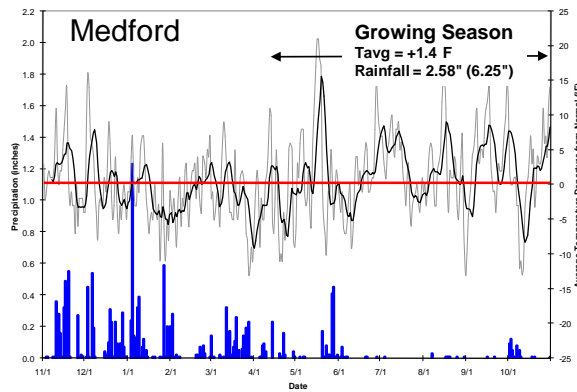
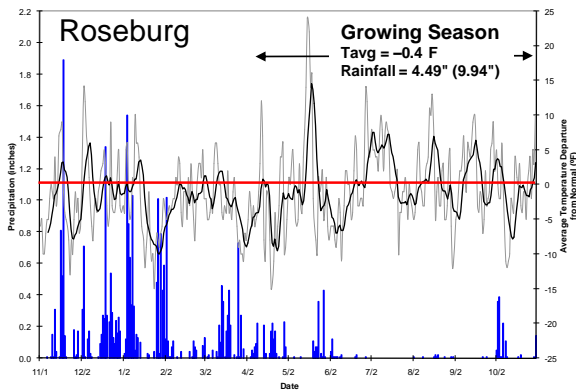
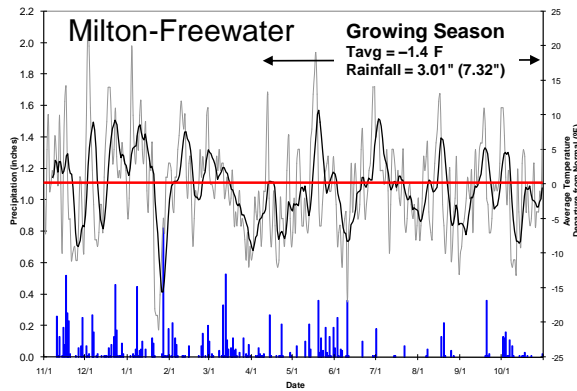
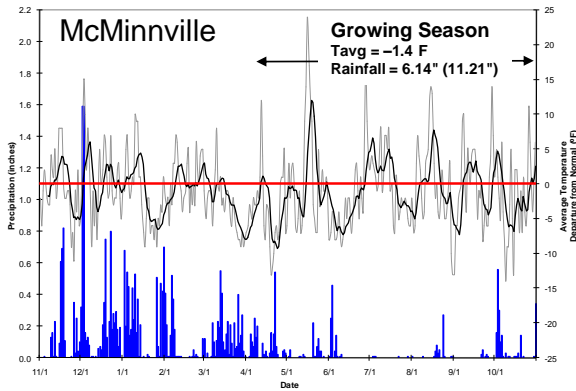
Four region monthly and growing season temperature departures from normal – Most locations saw generally cooler temperatures during the dormant period and during the calendar year. The 2008 vintage started with March and April being significantly below normal, followed by a warmer than normal month of May, a cooler than normal June, a mixed July, August, and September with the south warmer and the north and east cooler, and closing with a generally cooler than average October except for Medford. Overall the vintage ended up being 0.4 to 1.4°F cooler than normal for Roseburg, McMinnville, and Milton-Freewater while Medford was 1.4°F warmer than normal.

Seasonal and Monthly Precipitation Departures from Normal



This chart represents precipitation departures by month, the dormant period (Nov-Mar), the year (Jan-Oct), and the growing season (Apr-Oct) from the NWS stations (www.noaa.gov)

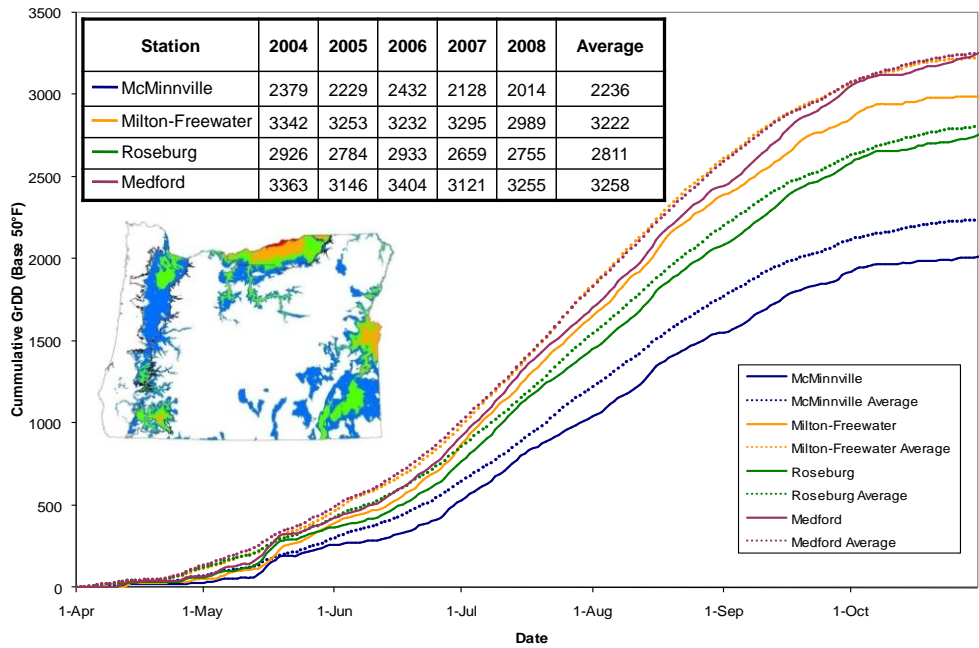
Four region monthly and season precipitation departures from normal – Besides January in Roseburg and Medford, the state was near normal to significantly drier than normal during the dormant, calendar year, and growing season. Rainfall during the growing season was 40-55% less than normal, with the Roseburg and McMinnville experiencing the greatest deficits.



These charts represent daily weather data for each of the NWS stations (www.noaa.gov) for the period 11/1/2007 to 10/31/2008 for precipitation (left axis, blue bars) and temperature departures from the long term normal (right axis, grey lines are daily values, black line is a weekly average, and the red line is the average line for daily temperatures). The inset is for the growing season (Apr-Oct) with the season's overall average temperature departure and the amount of rainfall compared to the average in parentheses. Produced by Gregory V. Jones, Southern Oregon University

Four region Nov 1, 2007 to Oct 31, 2008 temperature and precipitation charts – the cooler than average 2008 vintage resulted from a colder than normal North Pacific Ocean coupled with a La Niña in the tropical Pacific. Overall a relatively cold late winter took us into a very cool spring with March and April temperatures across the state anywhere from 2-4°F below normal. The month of May followed with a ten day spell of extreme heat with days as much as 20-25°F above normal. June through September followed with wider than normal swings between warm periods and cool periods punctuated by a frost/freeze event in mid-October like never seen before in many locations throughout the west. Rainfall during the growing season was 40-55% less than normal, but with some rain during the ripening period in late September and early October.

2008 Growing Season Cumulative Degree-Days



This chart represents the 2008 cumulative growing degree-days compared to the five year average for 2004-2008 for the growing season (Apr-Oct) from the NWS stations (www.noaa.gov)

Four region accumulated growing degree-day values - Oregon saw a very slow start to the growing season heat accumulation due to the cold spring conditions but caught up in most regions during the heat spikes in mid-May. The rest of the growing season saw heat accumulation lag behind the 2004-2008 average, but remaining near the 1971-2000 average. Roseburg and Medford were near their respective five year averages, while McMinnville and Milton-Freewater were down ~10% from their five year averages.