



BUTTONWOOD

WINERY & VINEYARD

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE SINCE 1968

The basic principle of sustainable farming is that our present needs must be met using methods that do not diminish the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Both natural and human resources are considered. Add to this stewardship of resources the practical necessity of economic survival and you have sustainable farming. And the very best part is that sustainability is not a one size fits all situation. Within the sustainable framework, Buttonwood, and each and every other farm or vineyard, can assess its specific needs and tailor a program to meet those needs.

Sustainability at Buttonwood began in 1968 when Betty Williams left her life in southern California and purchased beautiful Buttonwood Farm. She had developed an early interest in the environment and over the years nurtured a desire to be connected to the land. At Buttonwood, Betty initiated many projects involving cultivation of the land, including our vineyard, peach orchard, row crops and the tasting room gardens. Over the years most of the growing has been done organically (without synthetic chemicals), but organics is very narrow in focus and Betty's vision has been more far-reaching. While use of organic methods is useful for keeping toxins from being added to water supplies and the food chain, it does not take into account the equally important issues of sensible use of human resources, soil compaction and erosion, restoration or conservation of natural habitats and promotion of biodiversity, all of which are important in enhancing and maintaining the integrity of the land for the long term.

So, what exactly do we do at Buttonwood that identifies us as sustainable? Although Buttonwood is not certified organic, we employ as many organic methods as practical. For instance, our orchard manager makes his own compost using pesticide and herbicide free matter mixed in with horse manure. Unwanted critters around the farm are trapped. Weeds on the farm and in the vineyard are removed mechanically or by hand. And while organic methods of pest control are always the first line of defense, sometimes it's not enough. A sustainable philosophy allows us to apply an effective amount of insecticide in a problem area, such as a leaf hopper infestation. Why is this a good thing? Chances are a pest problem begins as a small problem limited to a small area. If not controlled, the problem could spread throughout the vineyard, endangering the entire crop or necessitating the use of a substantial quantity of pesticide spread over a large area. But if the problem is taken care of in the early stages, the crop is saved and the use of toxic chemicals is eliminated. It makes more sense.

Soil management is also key at Buttonwood. Healthy soil maintains healthy plants which make them less susceptible to pests and result in delicious fruit. We maintain healthy soil by using drip irrigation (lessens water use as well as the optimum way to deliver nutrients to the plants), planting “green manure” cover crops (enhances the soil, provides better water filtration, attracts “good” pests), and monitoring and adjusting nutrient content as needed.

Buttonwood also seeks to enhance the landscape by maintaining natural ecosystems within the property that attract diverse forms of wildlife. Attracting birds of prey such as owls and hawks helps keep the grape-eating bird population as well as small rodents and ground burrowers in control. Our pond supports a diversity of riparian wildlife providing more links in the natural food chain. Wildlife corridors have been left untouched allowing deer and other natural dwellers to move from area to area along Alamo Pintado Road. Native plants needing less in the way of irrigation, as well as other drought tolerant plants, grace both our gardens and “wild” areas.

In 2016 we will be working toward Sustainable certification from the California Association of Winegrape Growers for both the vineyard and winery.

The beauty of sustainability is that business and commerce need not be at odds with the environment. Human life and activity can be integrated into the natural landscape in ways that enhance both. At Buttonwood, we strive to blend environmental concerns with the business and fun of making and enjoying wine and that’s what makes this a unique and extraordinary place. If you stop to think about it, you’ve known that all along. It’s one of the reasons you enjoy visiting.

