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Wine Industry Newsletter

Contents

Revisiting 30-year Chardonnay rootstock trial in Pemberton

A comprehensive rootstock trial was established in 1997 by the Department of Agriculture (now DPIRD) at a commercial vineyard in the Pemberton wine region. The aim was to better understand how different rootstocks influence vine yield, fruit quality and vine vigour, while also providing protection against soil-borne pests such as phylloxera and nematodes, and tolerating salinity.

The trial featured Chardonnay (clone I10V1) grafted onto 10 rootstocks. Own-rooted Chardonnay vines were included as a ‘control’, equalling 11 ‘treatments’ in all. The experiment was laid out as 11 randomised replicates per treatment, 3 vines per replicate (middle vines as treatment vine with buffer vines each side) planted across 4 partial rows, an approach designed to ensure robust, reliable and statistically meaningful results.

Rootstocks assessed

Table 1: Summary of rootstocks selected for the trial and their associated attributes

Note: Information derived from multiple sources[1-10], noting that some discrepancies were found in the literature.

Rootstock	Parentage	Vigor	Drought tolerance	Salinity	Root-knot nematode	Dagger nematode	Phylloxera resistance
99 Richter	*V. berlandieri* × *V. rupestris*	Vigorous	High	Moderate	Medium–High	Low–Medium	High
110 Richter	*V. berlandieri* × *V. rupestris*	Mod–Vigorous	High	Moderate	Low–Medium	Low	High
1103 Paulsen	*V. berlandieri* × *V. rupestris*	Mod–Vigorous	High	Moderate	Medium–High	Low	High
140 Ruggeri	*V. berlandieri* × *V. rupestris*	Mod–Vigorous	High	Moderate–High	Med–High	Low	High
34EM Foex	*V. berlandieri* × *V. riparia*	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Medium	Low	High
5BB Kober	*V. berlandieri* × *V. riparia*	Mod–Vigorous	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Med–High	Low–Medium	High
5C Teleki	*V. berlandieri* × *V. riparia*	Mod–Vigorous	Low-Moderate	Low–Moderate	Med–High	Low–Medium	High

Rootstock	Parentage	Vigor	Drought tolerance	Salinity	Root-knot nematode	Dagger nematode	Phylloxera resistance
Schwarzmann	*V. riparia* × *V. rupestris*	Low–Moderate	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Med–High	High	High
K51-52 Lider	*V. champinii* × *V. riparia*	Mod–Vigorous	Low-Moderate	Low	Med–High	Low–Medium	Moderate
K51-40 Lider	*V. champinii* × *V. riparia*	Mod–Vigorous	Low	Low–Moderate	Medium	Low	Moderate

Harvesting of the 2026 fruit parcels

Early Findings (2002–2004)

Between 2002 and 2004, DPIRD research scientist Kristen Brodison (née Kennison) evaluated the performance of these rootstocks over a 3-year period. Key findings included:

- Higher yields were achieved from most grafted vines compared with own-rooted Chardonnay.
- 5C Teleki, 34EM Foex and 110 Richter provided the most favourable balance of high yield, fruit composition and manageable vigour.
- Schwarzmann and 5BB Kober performed poorly, producing low yields and fruit with lower acidity and higher pH.
- K51-40 Lider consistently produced reduced yield and large sized berries.
- 99 Richter tended to delay sugar maturity.
- Most rootstocks did not increase juice potassium content; however, K51-32 Lider produced the highest potassium levels and advanced maturity.

Field walk attendees inspecting the rootstock trial site in 2005

Revisiting the trial: 29 years on

Nearly 3 decades after planting, DPIRD researchers, supported by Wines of WA and the Wine Australia Regional Program, are returning to the trial site to assess the performance of these now 29 year old vines. By collecting the same viticultural data recorded during the initial stages of establishment, the team aims to understand how these rootstocks have performed over the long term under Western Australian growing conditions.

This work has the potential to provide valuable insights into:

- long-term yield and vine balance
- changes in fruit composition over time
- rootstock longevity
- rootstock selection for future plantings of Chardonnay in WA.

The trial also highlights the value of well-designed, accurately mapped vineyard experiments, which can become long term research assets benefiting industry for decades.

What comes next?

Fruit has been harvested from all 10 rootstocks and the own-rooted control vines. These are currently being produced into standardised small-lot wines at DPIRD's wine laboratory. Once bottled in the latter half of this year, these wines will be presented at industry tasting workshops, offering growers an opportunity to experience the sensory impact of each rootstock firsthand and be presented with the viticultural data collected at harvest.

For more information about this project contact Richard Fennessy.

The DPIRD team harvesting the Chardonnay rootstock trial on 3 March 2026

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New horticultural entomologist

DPIRD welcomes Dr Kiran Horrocks as its new horticultural entomologist, based at the department's Bunbury regional office.

In south-west viticulture, Kiran is eager to reinvigorate research on garden weevils by addressing knowledge gaps on its ecology, impact, and sustainable control through novel approaches, and stands at the ready to learn as much as possible about entomological challenges facing vineyards.

Dr Kiran Horrocks

Kiran completed his tertiary education at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. During his undergraduate studies, Kiran first developed a great interest in applied entomology, when learning about programs that aim to sustainably control invasive insect pests in horticulture, underpinned by an understanding of their ecology. He went on to complete a Masters and PhD in this field, based out of Plant and Food Research (now Bioeconomy Science Institute) in Auckland which supported the applied nature of his research.

His postgraduate research focused on novel approaches to improve the contribution of biological control – the control of pests using natural enemies such as predators and parasitoids – to the eradication and long-term management of high-risk pests in New Zealand, such as brown marmorated stink bug.

He published on topics such as the capacity for resident natural enemies to resist future insect pest invasions, and novel methods to improve the environmental safety of introduced biological control agents, mitigating the prohibitive regulatory process in obtaining approval for their release.

After finishing his PhD, Kiran took up a postdoctoral position in Switzerland at Agroscope, which is the Swiss federal government's centre for agricultural research. Here, he worked on projects aiming to improve preparedness in biological control against high-risk horticultural and forestry pests, by conducting feasibility and risk assessments, and obtaining release approvals, before target pests arrive in a country.

At Agroscope, Kiran also worked on projects that identified knowledge gaps surrounding both the environmental and economic impacts associated with horticultural pest insects. At a continental level, he interfaced his postdoctoral research with various components of relevant industry including growers, plant product importers and exporters, and beneficial organism suppliers. This was achievable through project engagement with the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation, and participation in large EU-funded research projects.

At DPIRD, Kiran is looking forward to applying his international research experience in entomology towards actionable outcomes that have real impact for growers in Western Australia's southwest, but also beyond. He believes that first developing a strong understanding of a pest's ecology in a region is the key to achieving robust and sustainable management solutions.

Dr Kiran Horrocks can be contacted at kiran.horrocks@dpird.wa.gov.au.

Seasonal climatic update

As the vintage progresses, climatic data for the 2025-26 growing season has been compiled by DPIRD technical officer Yu-Yi Liao. As done in previous newsletter editions, data for all 9 of WA's wine regions is presented to support the wine industry to compare and contrast vineyard performance with previous and current climatic conditions.

The following regional summaries include bar graphs illustrating monthly rainfall data and accumulated rainfall for the last 4 seasons from June to May and graphs showing accumulated growing degree days (*GDD) for each region (noting current season data ends on 28 February).

*GDD units= $\frac{(Daily\ Max\ temperature + Daily\ Min\ temperature)}{2} - 10°C$ base

Overview

Accumulated rainfalls this season are higher than the last 3 seasons in most regions driven by increased winter and spring rainfall.

GDD generally tracking higher than 2022-23 but lower than previous 2 seasons.

Swan District

Figures 1 and 2 show data collected from the BoM Millendon weather station (site number 9,281) representing the Swan District wine region.

With higher rainfall in August and September during this current season, Swan District has accumulated the highest winter (497 mm) and spring (162 mm) rainfall over these 4 seasons.

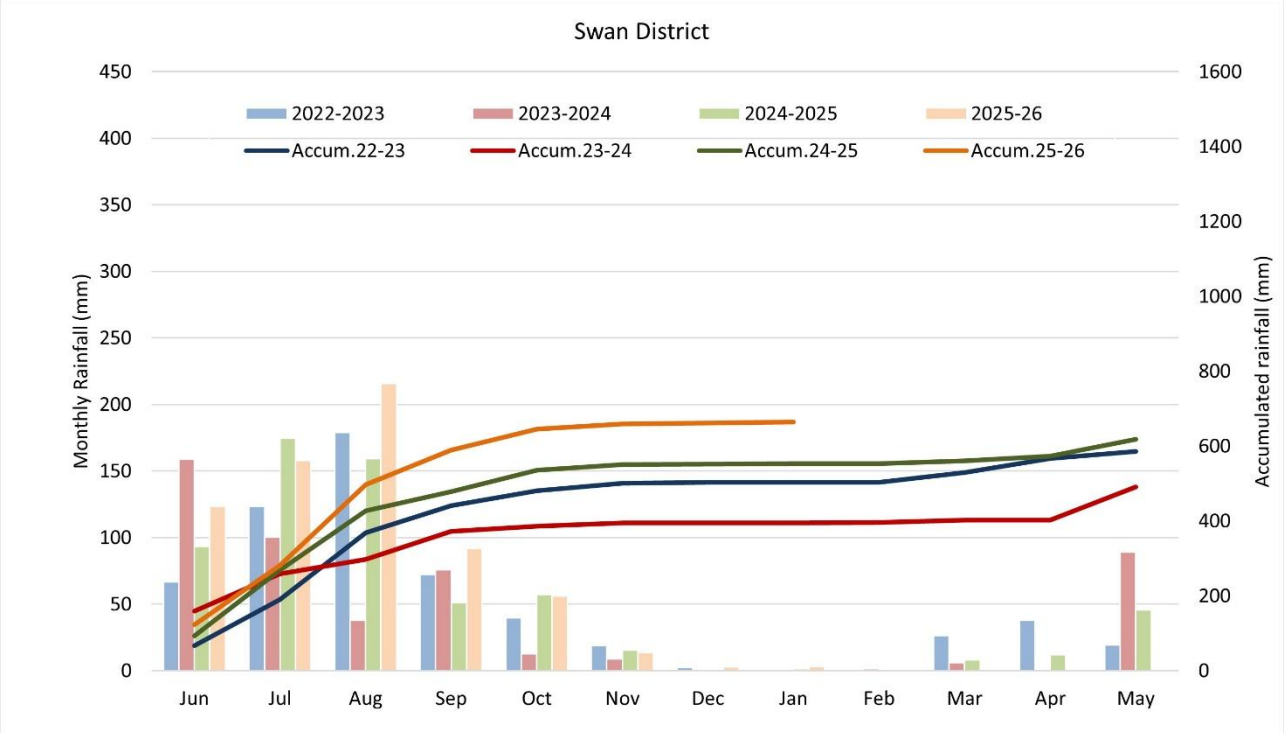

Figure 1: Swan District 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

A cooler October saw the 2025-26 GDD trend similarly with the 2022-23 season until early November, after which a consistent separation appears and continues to February. This season is the second coolest vintage in terms of accumulated GDD units compared to the recent 4 years with 1,899 GDD units recorded at the end of February 2026.

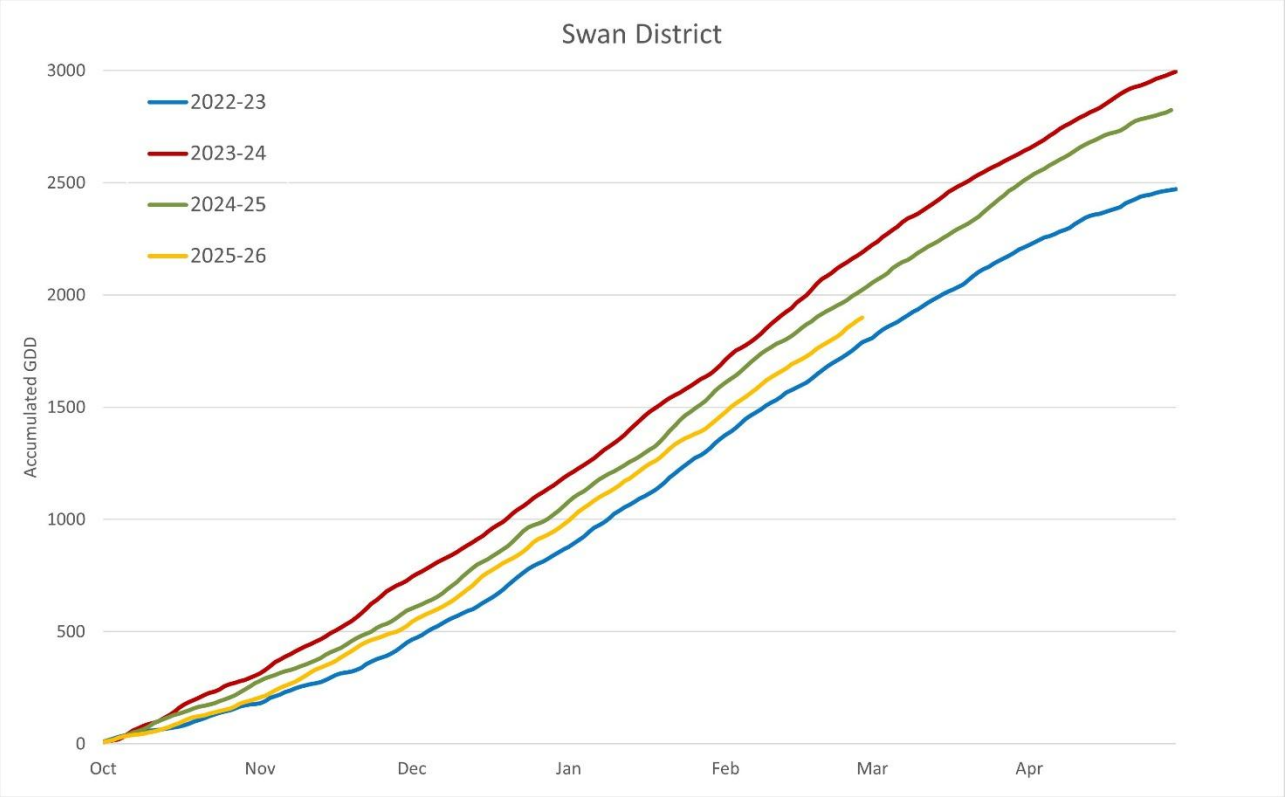

Figure 2: Swan District 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Perth Hills

Perth Hills region data in Figures 3 and 4 are produced from 2 weather stations, BoM station Bickley (site number 9,240) and DPIRD station Glen Eagle.

2025-26 experienced the highest winter rainfall (747 mm), tracking slightly above last season. Spring rainfall (227 mm) is also higher than average (190 mm) for the last 4 seasons.

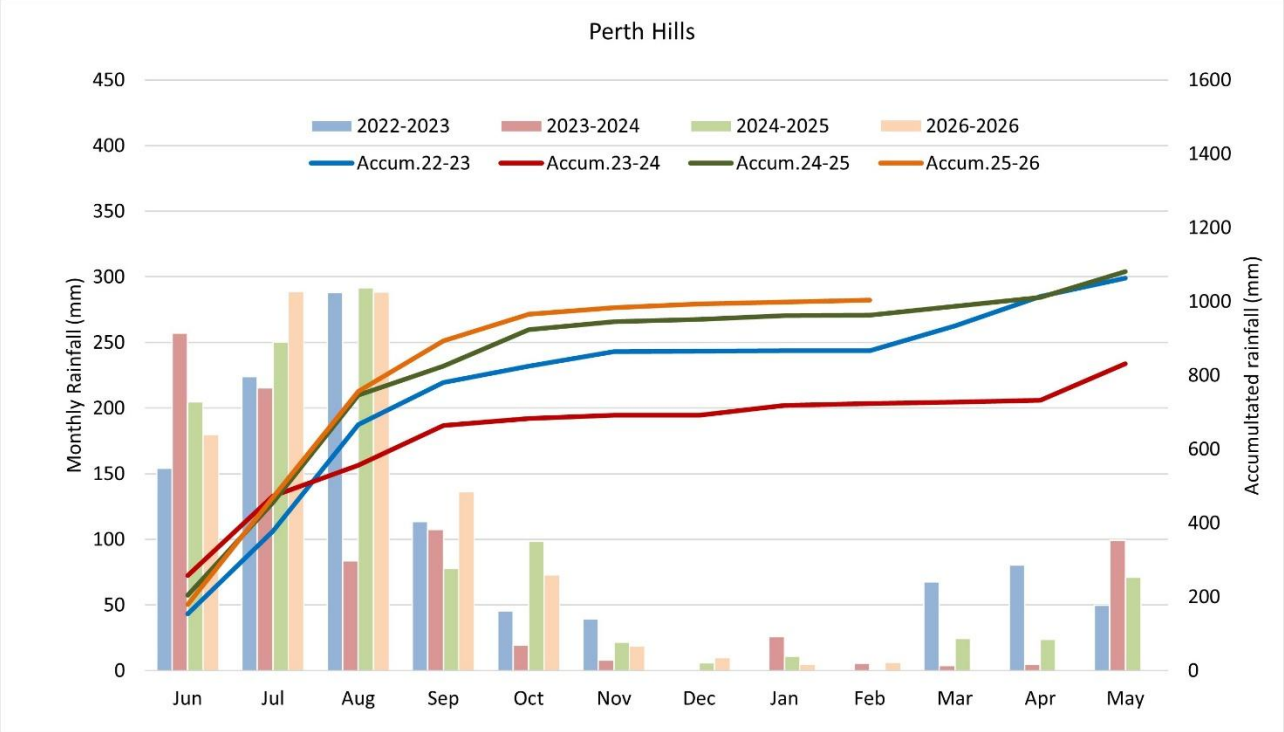

Figure 3: Perth Hills 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

Perth Hills region experienced a relatively cool spring and has marked 1,656 GDD which is also the second coolest compared to the last 4 seasons.

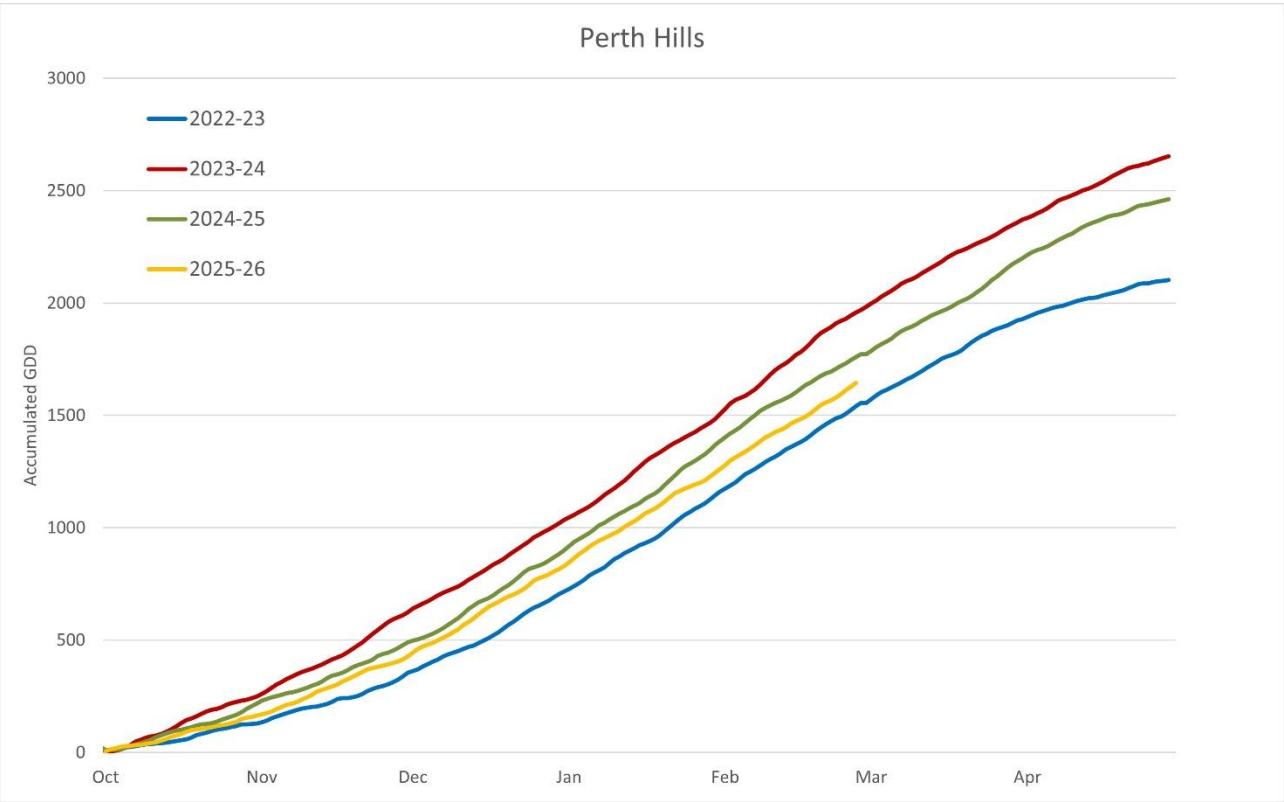

Figure 4: Perth Hills 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Peel

Peel's data in Figures 5 and 6 is sourced from BoM Dwellingup weather station (site number 9,538).

Across the 4 vintages, rainfalls in the Peel region for the current season were similar in June and July, before increasing notably from August through to November, making 2025- 26 the highest cumulative rainfall by the end of February.

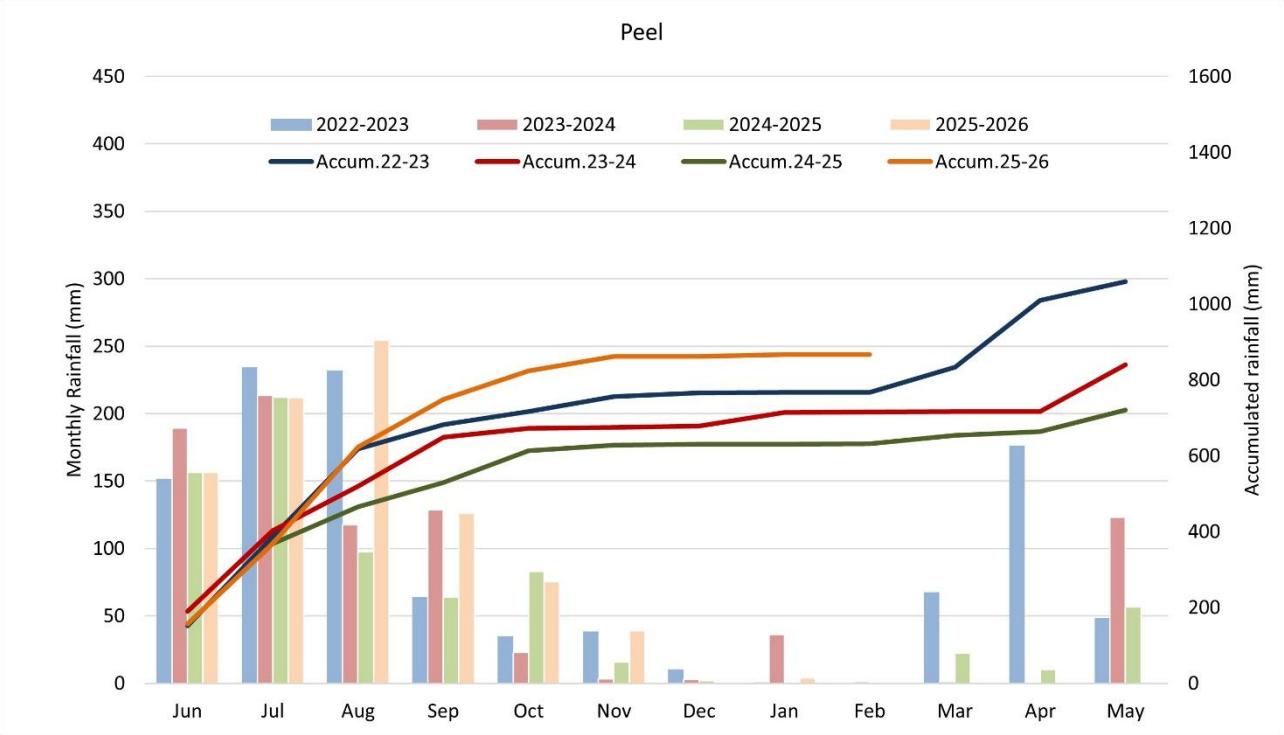

Figure 5: Peel 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

Peel had accumulated 1,549 GDD units by the end of February. Accumulated GDD followed a similar trend compared to the 2 northern wine regions near Perth.

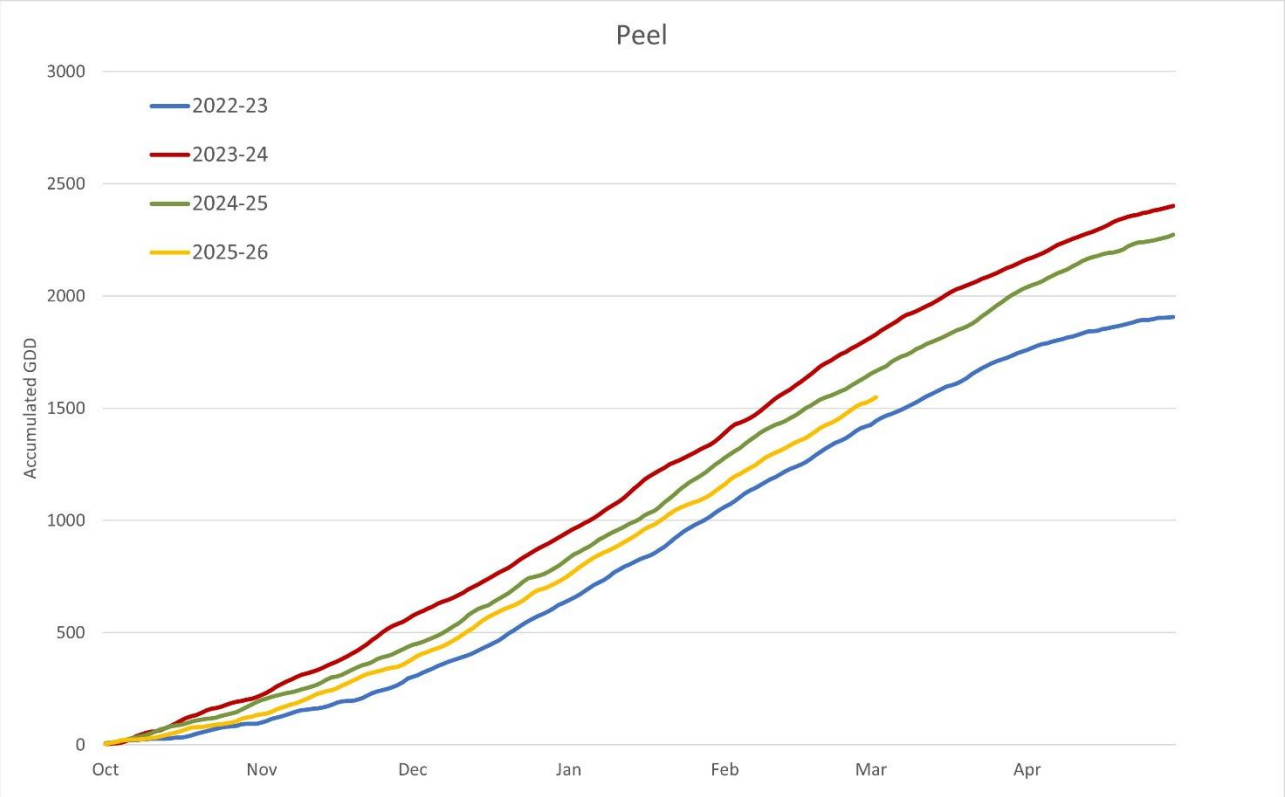

Figure 6: Peel 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Geographe

Data derived from DPIRD's weather stations, Capel, Donnybrook and Dardanup 2, were compiled to represent Geographe in Figures 7 and 8.

Considering the last 4 seasons, Geographe is the only region that accumulated slightly lower rainfall (758 mm) compared with last year (787 mm) to the end of February. This region has marked the second highest winter rainfall (551 mm) and highest spring rainfall (200 mm) this season when compared to the last 3.

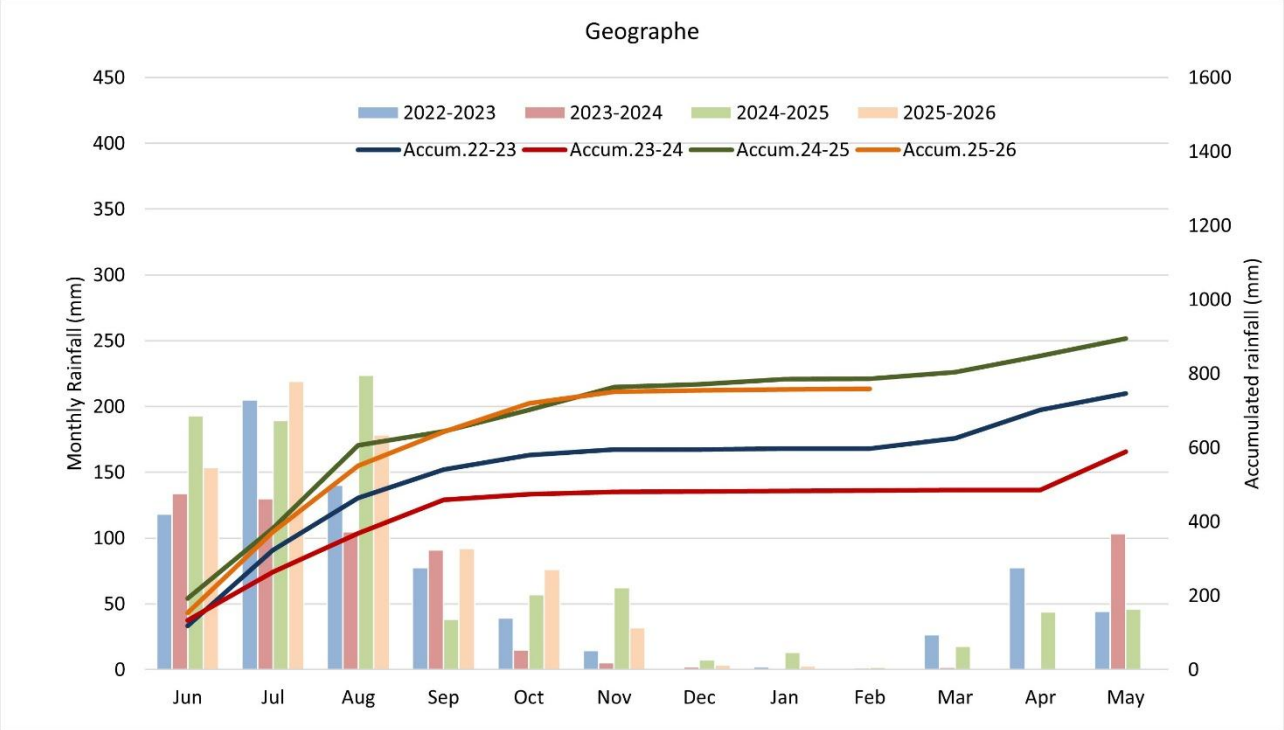

Figure 7: Geographe 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

From spring, the current season's accumulated GDD tracked slightly lower than last season; however, with some warmer days from December, the 2025-26 trendline starts to closely align with 2024-25. By the end of February, 2025-26 has accumulated only 12 GDD units higher than 2024-25.

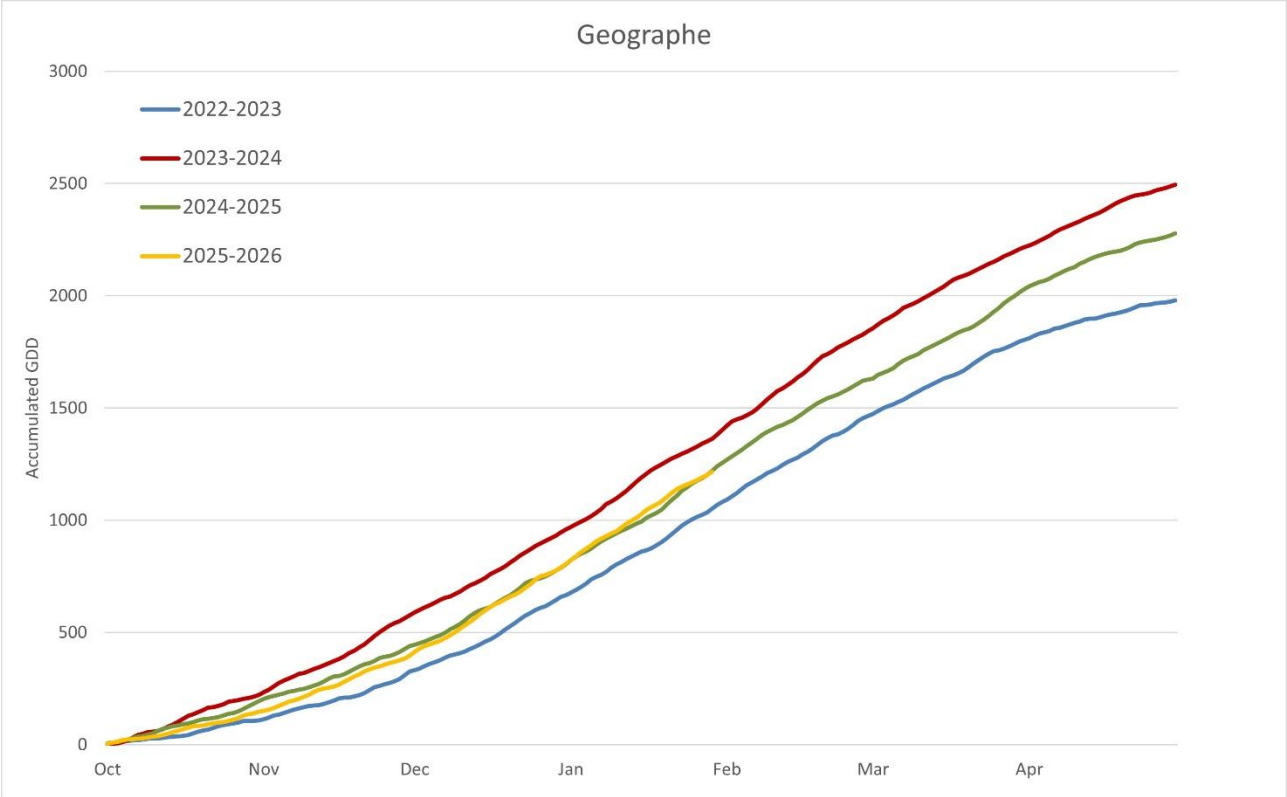

Figure 8: Geographe 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Margaret River

Figures 9 and 10 illustrate Margaret River's seasonal data from DPIRD's Vasse, Wilyabrup, Margaret River, Rosa Brook and Karridale weather stations.

Figure 9 shows a clear separation of accumulated seasonal rainfall in 2025-26 compared to the previous 3 seasons. The region experienced high rainfall in both winter and spring.

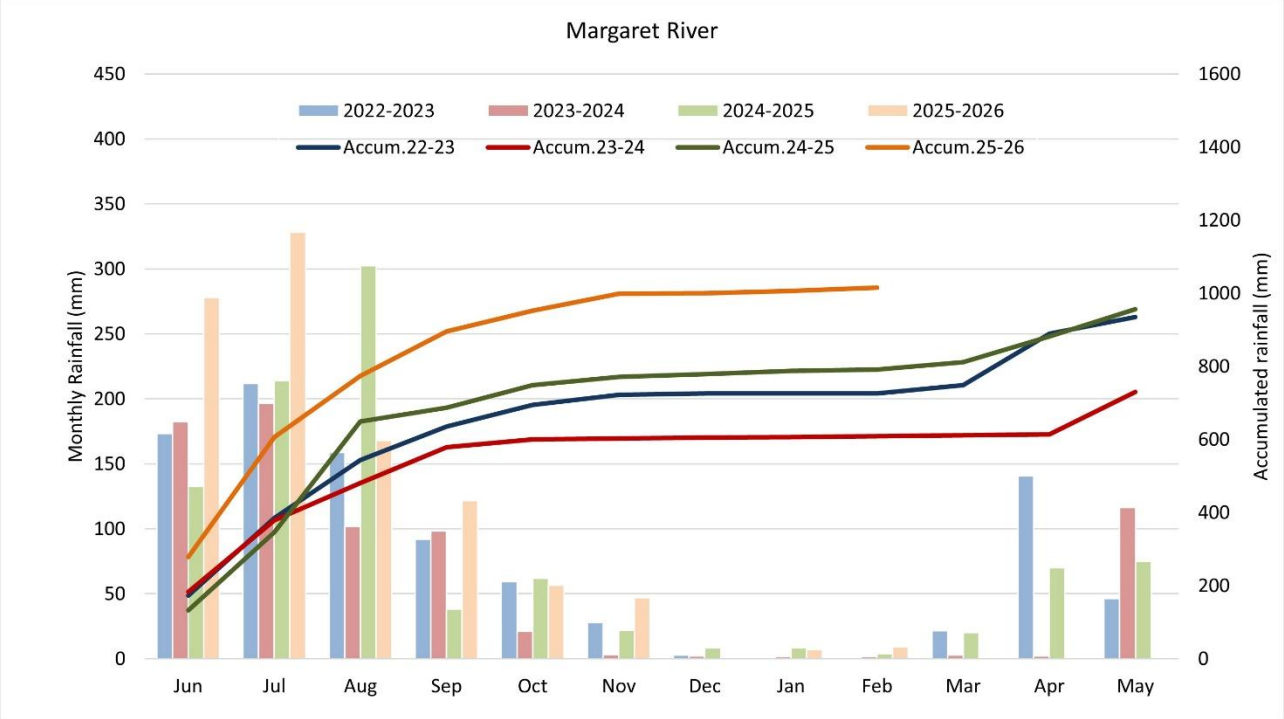

Figure 9: Margaret River 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

Margaret River wine region has accumulated similar GDD units to last season but a slowing trend is observed from the beginning of February, marking the accumulation of 1,287 GDD units.

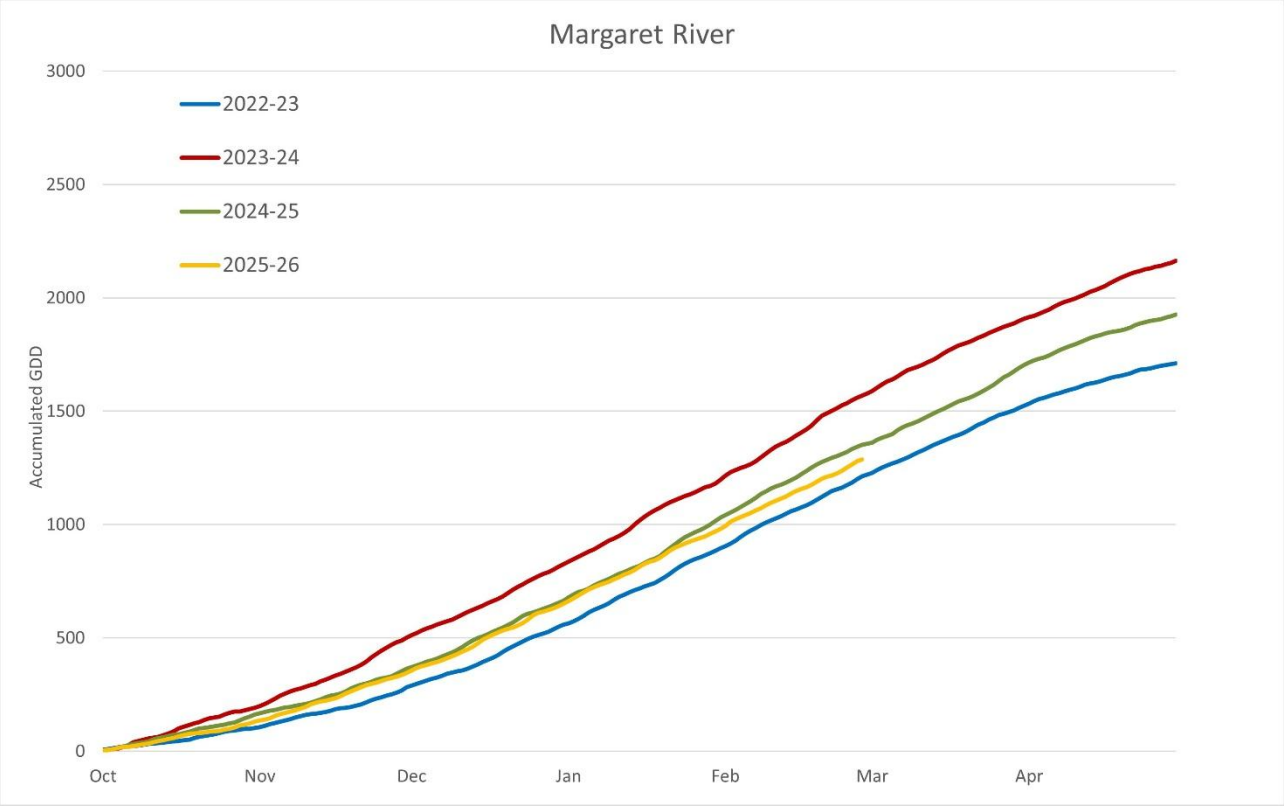

Figure 10: Margaret River 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Blackwood Valley

The data from BoM Bridgetown weather station (number 9,617) and DPIRD station Nannup are illustrated in Figures 11 and 12, representing the Blackwood Valley wine region.

Rainfall peaked in July (227 mm) and the significant rainfall in spring contributed to the highest rainfall accumulation (810 mm) at the end of February compared to the previous 3 seasons.

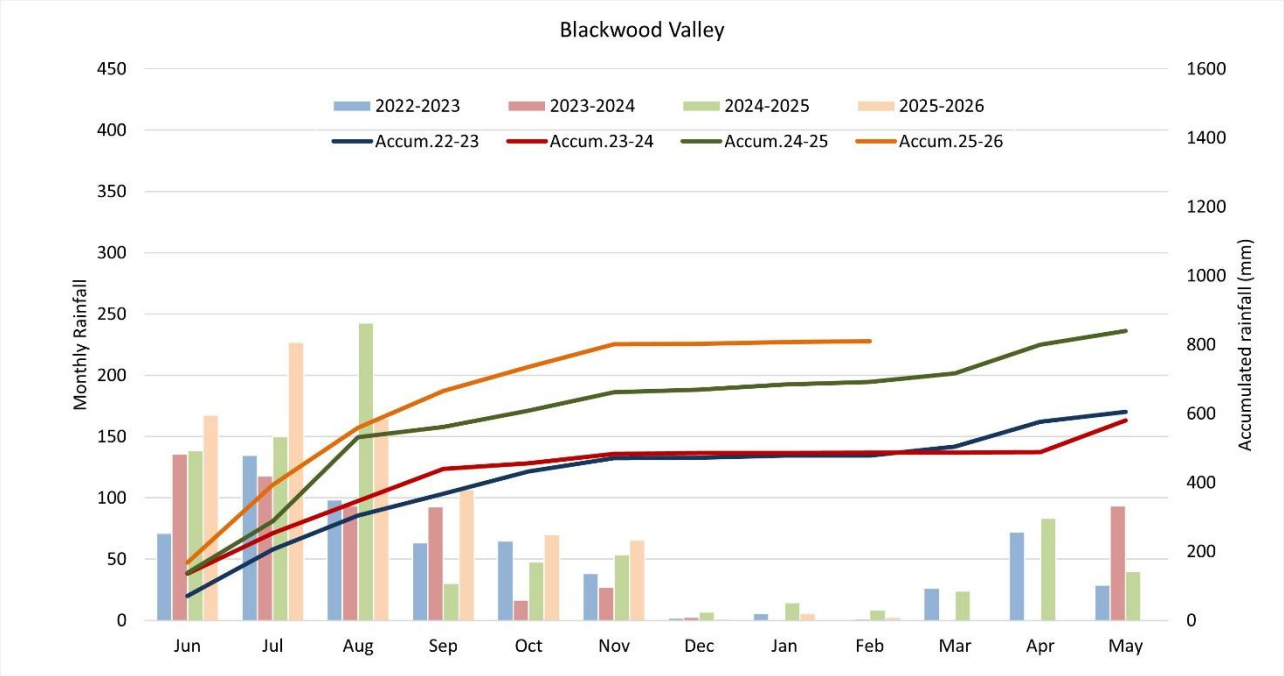

Figure 11: Blackwood Valley 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

Accumulated GDD to the end of February clearly positions the current season between 2024-25 and 2022-23.

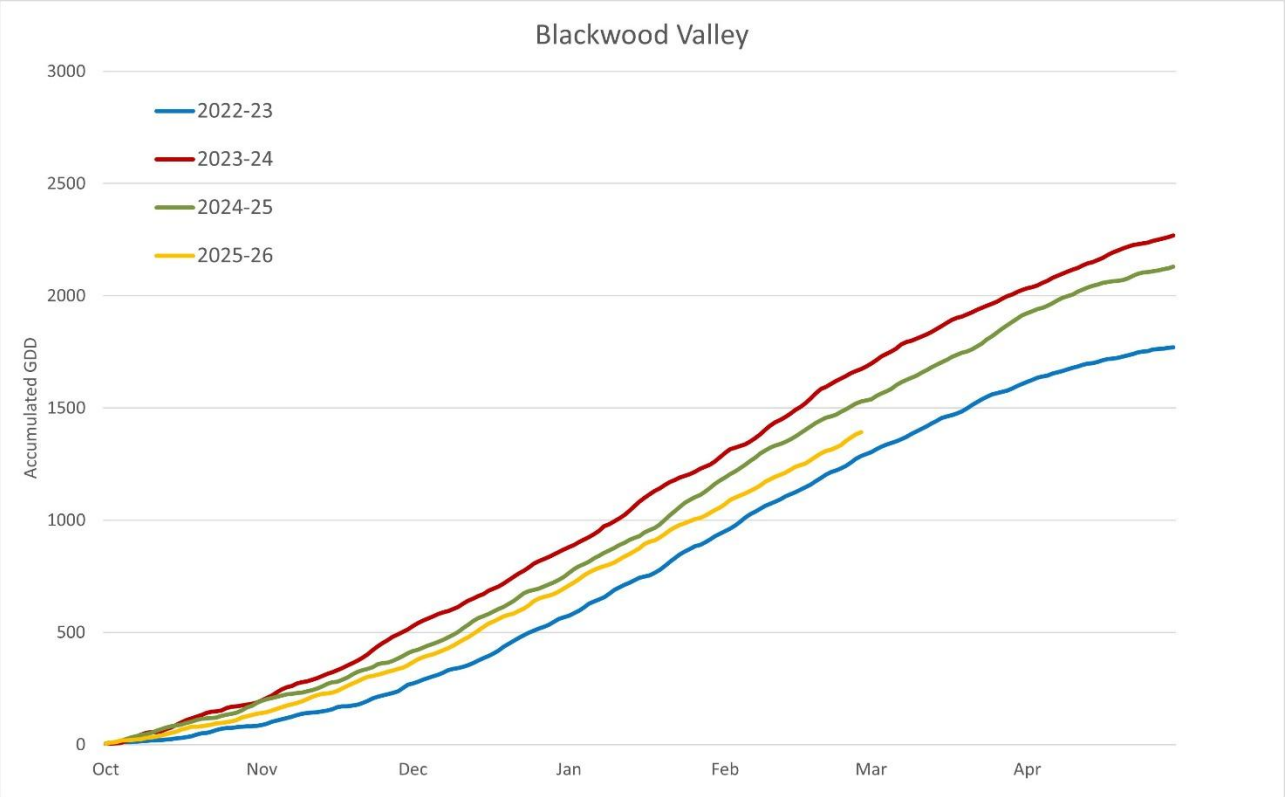

Figure 12: Blackwood Valley 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Manjimup

The BoM weather station at Manjimup (site number 9,573) and DPIRD's Manjimup HRS station provided data to represent the growing seasons in Figures 13 and 14.

Good winter (607 mm) and spring (273 mm) rainfall resulted in the Manjimup region recording the highest cumulative rainfall across the 4 seasons, reaching 892 mm by the end of February.

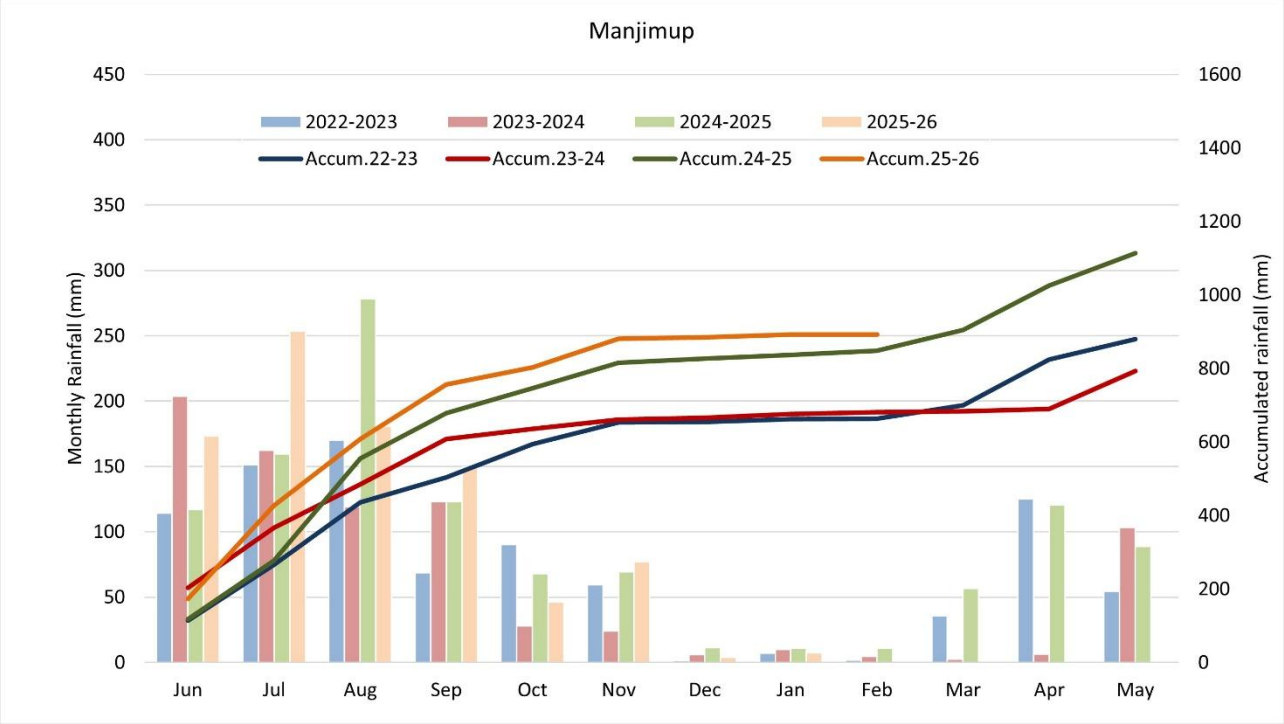

Figure 13: Manjimup 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

Manjimup recorded 1,251 GDD units by the end of February in 2025-26, placing the trend line between 2024-25 and 2022-23, a similar pattern observed in a number of other wine regions.

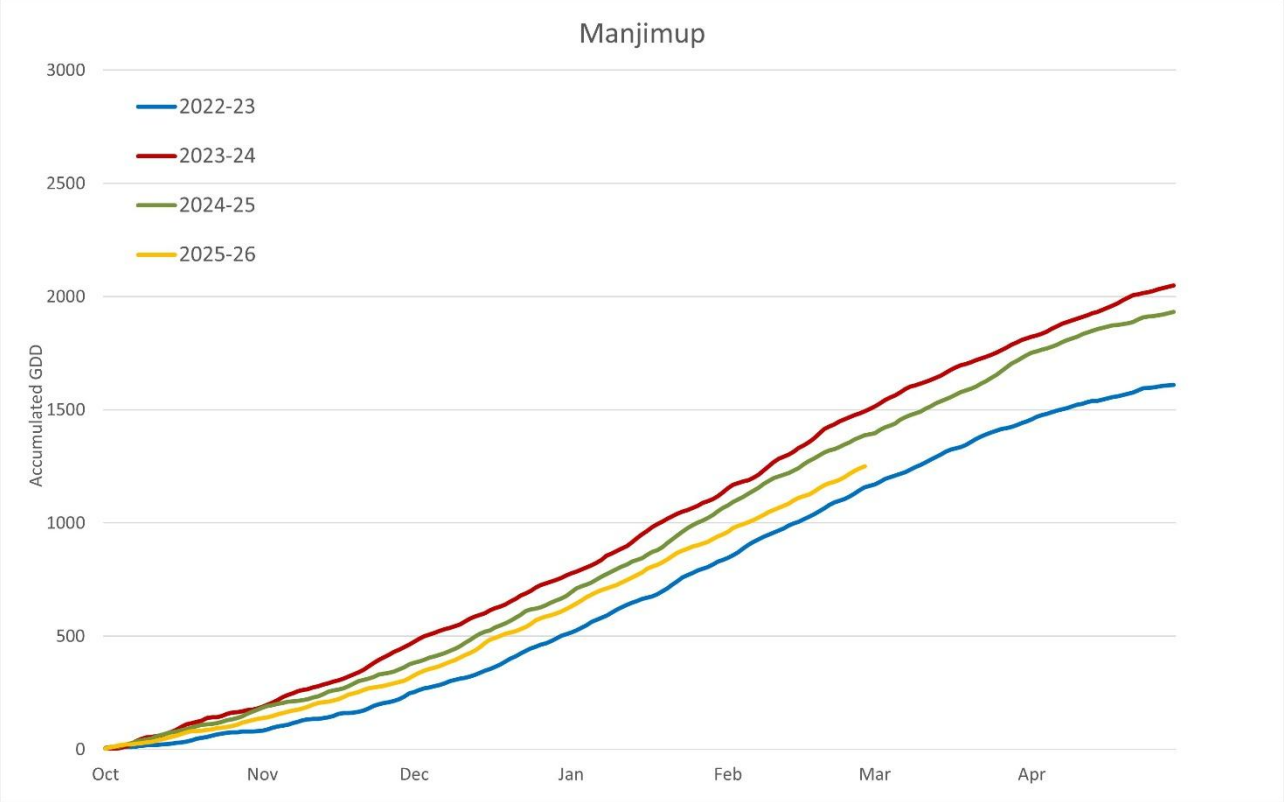

Figure 14: Manjimup 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Pemberton

Data from DPIRD Pemberton weather station is collated in Figures 15 and 16.

Even though 2023-24 had the wettest June in the last 4 seasons, 2025-26 received good consistent rainfall over the winter months to record a total of 781 mm (higher than the previous 3 seasons). This combined with 361 mm of rainfall in spring set up the region to accumulate the most rainfall to the end of February than the last 3 seasons.

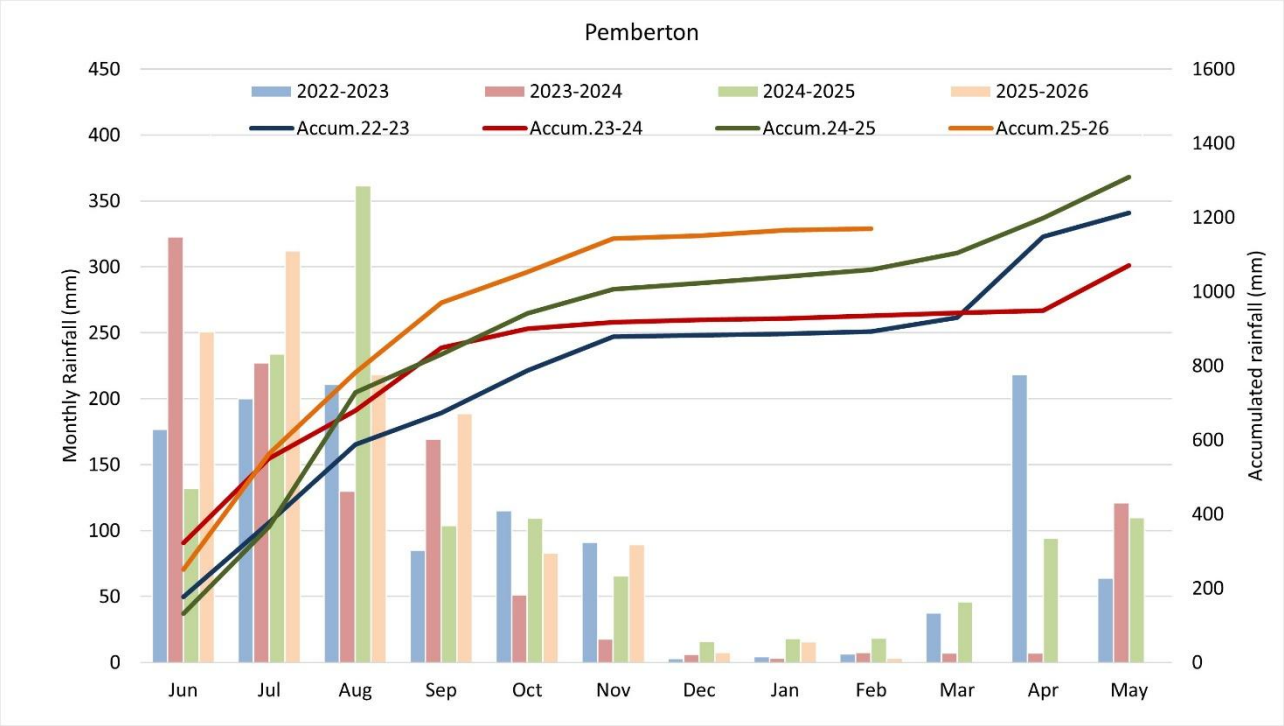

Figure 15: Pemberton 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

Compared to season 2024-25, accumulated GDD in 2025-26 has tracked marginally lower from October and the accumulation began to slow down from the end of January. By the end of February, it has marked 1,193 GDD units and similar to other regions, the trend line lies between 2024-25 and 2022-23.

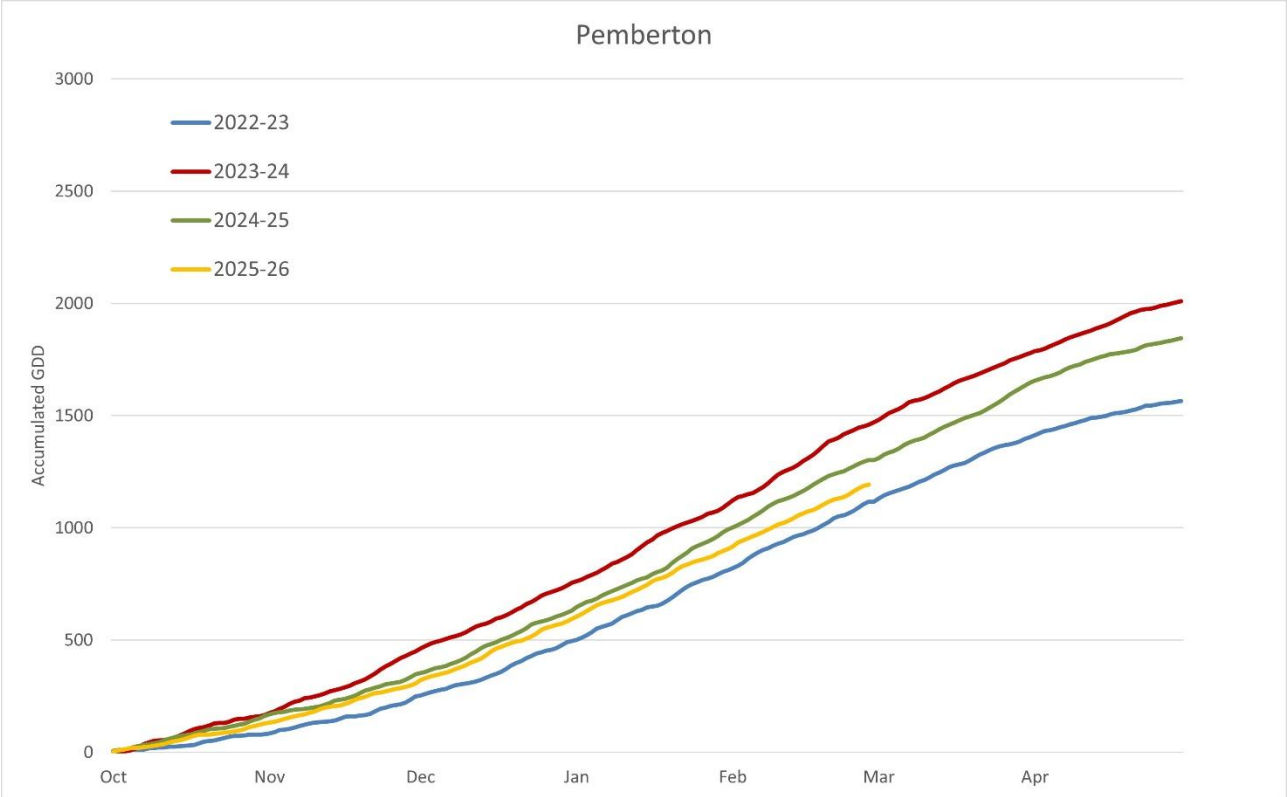

Figure 16: Pemberton 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

Great Southern

Data from BoM's Albany Airport (9,741) and Rocky Gully (9,964); Water Corporation's Quickup Dam, and DPIRD's Denmark, Mt Barker, Stirlings South, Frankland North and Frankland weather stations were combined to produce Figures 17 and 18, representing each of the subregions of the Great Southern wine region.

June and August received moderate rainfall compared to previous years but, significant rainfall in July together with good spring rains has resulted in the 2025-26 season recording the highest accumulated rainfall for the last 4 seasons at the end of February.

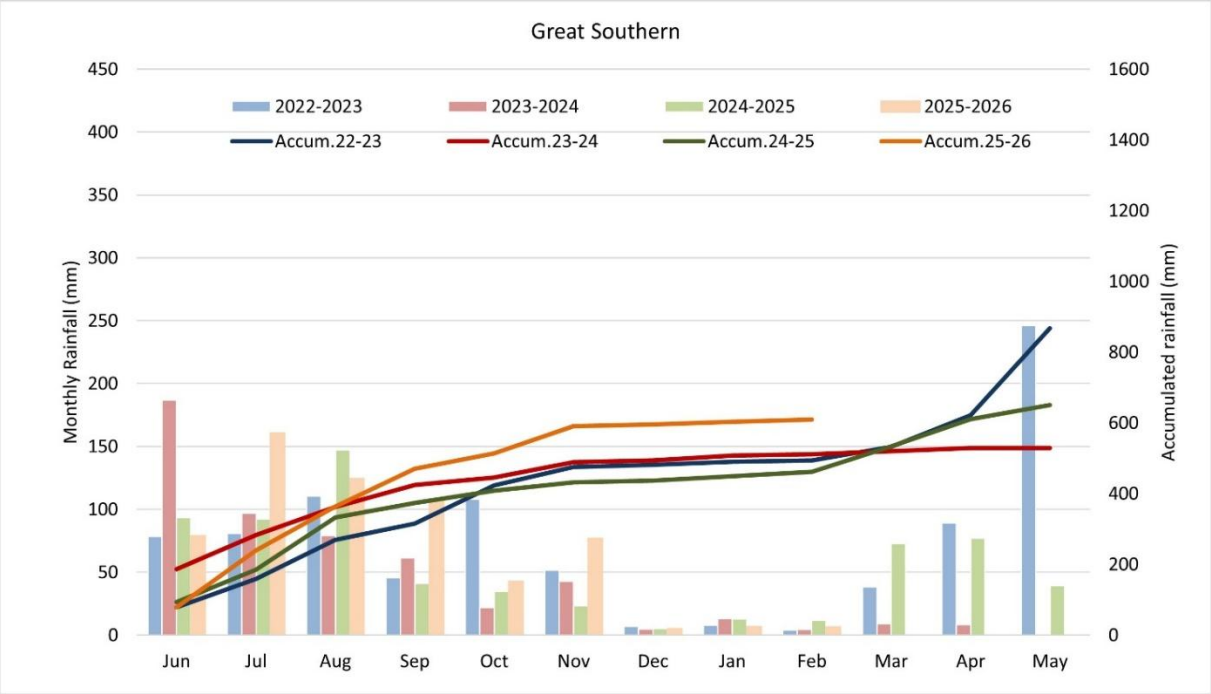

Figure 17: Great Southern 2022-26 season monthly and accumulated rainfall

In terms of heat accumulation, 2025-26 season has accumulated 1,247 GDD units which sits around half-way between the warmer 2023-2025 and cooler 2022-23 seasons.

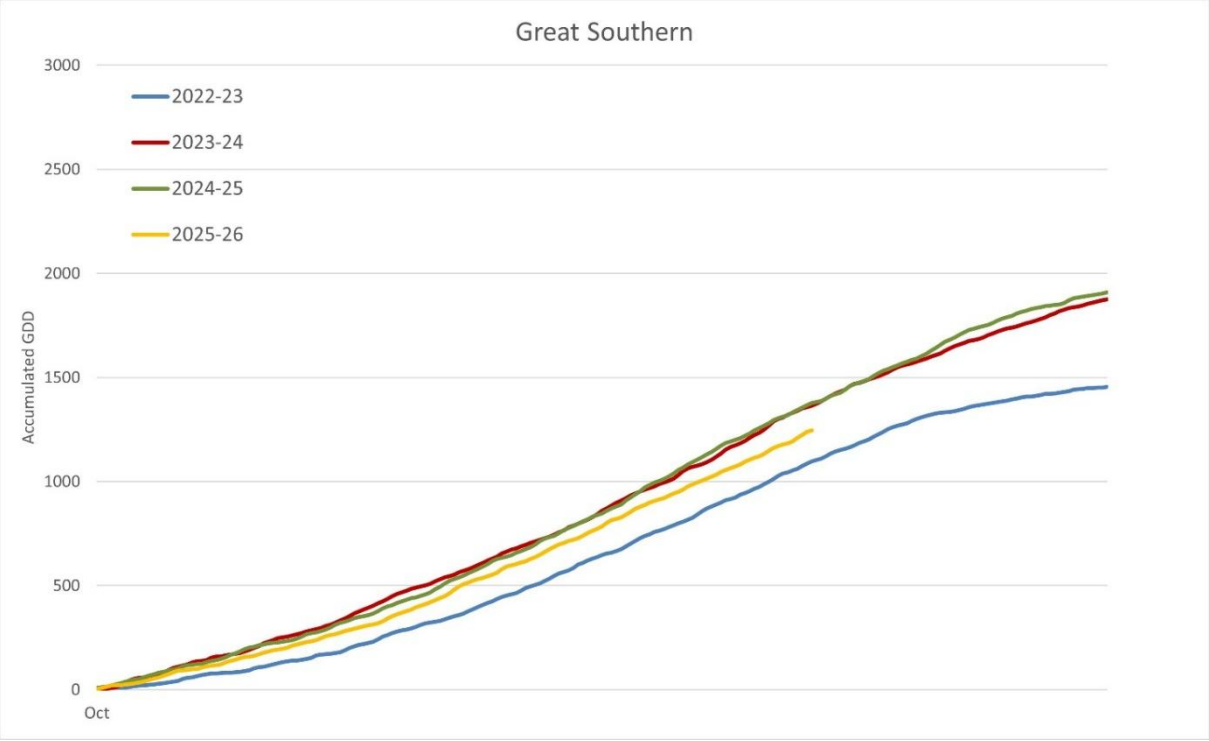

Figure 18: Great Southern 2022-26 accumulated growing degree days

For further information on the data presented, contact Yu-Yi Liao.

News from WAVIA

The WA Vine Improvement Association (WAVIA) welcomes some fresh faces to the committee and a brand-new website.

Jim Campbell-Clause founded WAVIA after setting up the first Vine Improvement Association in Western Australia in 1990 while he was with the Department of Agriculture (now DPIRD) and incorporated the association in 1991. When Jim left the department in 1998, he continued on the WAVIA Committee and has held the role of Chairperson since 2008.

Jim's dedication to vine improvement and the supply of high-quality propagation material to the state represents an impressive body of work which is now a benchmark across the nation. With Jim hanging up his hat as Chair this August, Leah Clearwater will be taking on the role to continue the critical objectives of the association.

Chris Harding has recently retired from his role as WAVIA Secretary, with Dan Stocker of Juniper Wines volunteering to take on this important position. Joining the committee as a Southern Regions Nursery Representative in 1996, Chris has been an incredible contributor to WAVIA for 30 years; managing data, meetings and the sale of propagation material among his many other duties as secretary.

We thank Jim and Chris for their hard work, passion and commitment to WAVIA and its objectives over the last 36 years – we hope you both enjoy a wonderful retirement!

To learn more about WAVIA, the role it performs for the wine industry, read updates on the relocation of WA's germplasm collection, or to order cuttings, please head to the new website: https://www.wavia.org.au/.

Events

On the topic of vine improvement, 2 events being held by the Margaret River Wine Association (MRWA) on 30 April are worth noting. From 9am to 12pm, Kick the Dirt Workshop – rootstocks for resilient vineyards featuring Nick Dry (2022 ASVO Viticulturist of the Year) will present technical insights into rootstock selection, vineyard resilience, disease preparedness, soil suitability and long-term vineyard sustainability.

Following the workshop, MRWA is holding the end of vintage lunch at the Beerfarm. Nick Dry will also feature with a presentation on National Grapevine Collection and WA Germplasm initiatives with a number of other short presentations.

MRWA and WoWA members are offered discounted tickets while non-members are also invited to attend these events. Further details available at Kick the Dirt Workshop and End of Vintage Celebration Lunch.

These events are proudly funded by Wines of Western Australia through the Western Australian Wine Industry Partnership, an industry-led initiative supported by the WA Government.

Support prescribed burn planning

As harvest operations progress into the later ripening red varieties, producers are encouraged to keep their regional wine associations informed of expected final harvest dates. This information helps ensure the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) is aware of these important dates and vineyard locations when planning their prescribed burns.

DBCA takes several factors into account when scheduling burns, including weather forecasts, fuel conditions, and the proximity of vineyards so to minimise the potential for smoke impacts on wine production.

For the most up-to-date details on planned burns, visit the Burns options program page on the DBCA website, which lists planned burns for 2025–2026. For real-time updates, check the Today's burns page.

Now is an ideal time to contact your regional association to update or confirm your contact details and vineyard locations so they can relay accurate information to DBCA.

Help shape programs that support your business – industry survey

The Western Australian Wine Industry Compass survey takes around 20 minutes and will directly inform future industry support tailored to your needs. This survey will provide input to programs to be delivered by Wines of Western Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, supported by Wine Australia.

Our aim is to position WA as a globally celebrated, sustainable fine-wine region. See the Western Australian Wine Industry Strategic Plan 2024-34.

This baseline survey will be repeated at 2 milestones through to 2028, tracking our collective progress across market growth, sustainability, workforce, and regional outcomes.

What's in it for you

Your input shapes future programs and helps us tailor support to meet real business needs across WA regions. Aggregate results will demonstrate our industry's impact and inform state-wide investment decisions.

Your contribution matters

Your thoughtful responses will shape the programs, funding, and support that benefit your business and the broader WA wine industry.

Survey details

Complete the Western Australian Wine Industry Compass Survey

Time:	20 minutes (we recommend setting aside uninterrupted time)
Response:	One per business
Confidentiality:	Results analysed in aggregate only – no individual data shared publicly
Follow-up:	To track change, same cohort re-invited at mid-point (2027) and final (2028).

Thank you for investing your time. Your perspective strengthens our industry.

Questions or prefer a phone interview?

More information

Larry Jorgensen

Chief Executive Officer

Wines of WA

Email: ceo@winewa.asn.au or phone: 0448 884 161

DPIRD virus testing services

With harvest wrapping up, many growers will be looking to preparations for winter and to the next season. It's a good time to take stock and consider whether you require virus testing on any of your vines, whether you're considering a new planting, grafting an existing block, or you've seen something symptomatic this season just gone.

The DPIRD Diagnostics and Laboratory Services (DDLS) plant molecular biology team have now moved to a new modern facility and are well set up to provide you with molecular testing for grapevine viruses.

The team can currently test for 13 different viruses:

1. Grapevine leaf roll virus 1 (GLRV1)
2. Grapevine leaf roll virus 2 (GLRV2)
3. Grapevine leaf roll virus 3 (GLRV3)
4. Grapevine leaf roll virus 4 (GLRV4)
5. Grapevine leaf roll virus 4 strain 5 (GLRV4 strain 5)
6. Grapevine leaf roll virus 4 strain 9 (GLRV4 strain 9)
7. Grapevine rupestris stem pitting virus (GRSPV)
8. Grapevine fleck virus (GFkV)
9. Grapevine virus A (GVA)
10. Grapevine virus B (GVB)
11. Grapevine pinot gris virus (GPGV)
12. Grapevine red blotch-associated virus (GRBaV)
13. Grapevine rupestris vein feathering virus (GRVFV)

Modern DDLS facilities

The DDLS team have recently adopted a panel approach to testing and charging, meaning that there are 3 tiers of charges – 1-4 viruses, 5-8 viruses and 9 + viruses. This means you can select either a specific combination of viruses to suit your requirements, or test for all of them, it's up to you.

The team are happy to discuss your needs, and to provide a quote.

More information

- **Grapevine viruses**
  Email: Monica Kehoe

- **Submission enquiries**
  Email: ddls@dpird.wa.gov.au

- **Grapevine Virus Diagnosis submission form**

- dpird.wa.gov.au/plant-pathology

DDLS team at work

Energy snapshot study

As global markets, retailers, and consumers increasingly prioritise sustainable practices, WA food and beverage manufacturers face rising expectations to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and demonstrate climate responsibility.

DPIRD, in partnership with RSM Australia, invite you to sign up for the Energy Snapshot Study.

This new initiative aims to understand emissions and energy use across all food and beverage manufacturing subsectors including dairy, seafood, meat, beverages, baked goods and processed and packaged foods

There's no cost to participate and it takes as little as 10 minutes to complete online.

Participating businesses receive valuable free benefits including:

- **A personalised carbon peer benchmark report** – understand how your business compares across industry
- **A WA food and beverage insights report** – includes study findings, future opportunities, industry emissions benchmarks and more
- **An invitation to the exclusive industry launch** (mid-2026)

Plus – businesses can express their interest for a comprehensive carbon footprint report (limited numbers available), valued at thousands of dollars!

Study insights will inform new programs to support business competitiveness as global markets move towards increased climate accountability.

Visit Energy Snapshot Study | Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Applications close 15 April 2026.

Future events

Vitivoltaics in the Valley – Trial results

If you're interested in the trial results and economic modelling behind integrating sustainable energy solutions into a viticultural operation, or you've heard about 'agrisolar' and want to understand it better, register for this event to tour the proof-of-concept agrisolar demonstration site and explore the concept in more depth.

Date:	**Wednesday, 22 April 2026**
Time:	**10 am – 2:30 pm**
Location:	**Plume Estate, Bickley WA, Australia**
Cost:	**Free**
What to bring:	Hat and closed shoes
Registrations:	**RSVP by Friday, 17 April (for catering purposes)** **Register now**

Learn more about this SW WA Hub project.

Kick the Dirt Workshop + End of Vintage 2026 Celebration Lunch

Wines of Western Australia, through the WA Wine Industry Partnership, is proudly supporting 2 linked industry events in Margaret River designed to build vineyard resilience and bring the region together to celebrate the 2026 harvest.

Kick the Dirt Workshop: Rootstocks for Resilient Vineyards

Join Nick Dry, ASVO Viticulturist of the Year (2022), for a technical and strategic session on building vineyard resilience through informed rootstock selection. This workshop will explore:

- rootstock performance and suitability
- biosecurity considerations
- disease preparedness
- soil and site matching
- long-term sustainability outcomes.

The session includes presentations plus a panel discussion featuring WA growers and researchers sharing practical insights from rootstock trials and commercial implementation.

Date: **Thursday, 30 April 2026**

Time: **9 am – 12 pm**
Location: **Duggan Pavilion, Hall Road, Cowaramup**
Cost: **MRWA and WoWA members: Free**

Non-members: $20 (includes morning tea)

Registrations: Register for the Workshop

End of Vintage 2026 Celebration Lunch

Featuring Keynote Speaker: Nick Dry

Vineyard teams are invited to unwind and celebrate the end of harvest with an engaging and relaxed afternoon.

Program includes:

- Keynote address by Nick Dry on the National Grapevine Collection and WA Germplasm initiatives.
- Short presentations from industry leaders:
    - Leah Clearwater (WAVIA)*:* Introduction to WAVIA's role
    - Steve Kirby, Howard Park Wines*:* Learnings from South Australia (2023 Viticulture & Sustainability Excellence Award winner)
    - Richard Bateman, Fabal Vineyards*:* Learnings from Italy (2024 Viticulture & Sustainability Excellence Award winner)

Date: **Thursday, 30 April 2026**
Time: **12:30 pm – 4 pm**
Location: **Beerfarm, 177 Gale Rd, Metricup**
Cost: **MRWA and WoWA members: $60**

Non-members: $80
(Includes 2-course lunch and a pint, wine or equivalent on arrival; cash bar thereafter.)

Registrations: Register for the Lunch

Biosecurity workshops

Wine Australia's R&I Program Manager Biosecurity, Pest and Disease, Robyn Dixon will be facilitating 2 regional workshops in June to help producers identify their unique farmgate biosecurity risks and guide participants on how to create bespoke biosecurity plans to protect vineyard assets and satisfy sustainability certification requirements.

Margaret River

Date: Tuesday, 9 June 2026
Time: 10:30 am – 2:30 pm

Swan Valley

Date: Thursday, 11 June 2026
Time: 10:30 am – 2:30 pm

Further information will be provided closer to the date, email expressions of interest to Richard Fennessy.