

MEDIA RELEASE

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NMIT viticulture tutor wins prestigious American award

A research paper on how soil temperature affects grapevine growth has earned NMIT viticulture tutor Dr Stewart Field a prestigious award from the American Society for Enology and Viticulture.

Dr Field, and co- authors Jason P. Smith and Bruno P. Holzapfel of Charles Sturt University in Australia, and Erin N. Morrison and R.J. Neil Emery of Trent University in Canada, looked into environmental effects on grapevines and the ‘physiological regulation of acclimation’.

“Basically, it involved thinking about climate change issues we might have to deal with—and the ways we can manage them above vine and below ground.”

“In the NMIT Marlborough vineyard we are doing ground cover trials using mussel shell mulch and weed mat and then measuring the temperatures, but it’s too early to assess the results yet.”

“However, future climate change impacts viticulture industries around the world and everyone is trying to grapple with how it will affect wine quality,” he says.

Dr Field’s research concluded that soil temperature significantly affects grapevine growth.

“Although it was an academic paper it may help viticulturists think about future strategies and lead on to how things might work in the vineyard.”

Dr Field was surprised to receive the award as he says it usually goes to some of the big names in world research rather than a ‘group of guys from New Zealand, Australia and Canada’.

He says it is recognition of the quality research going on in New Zealand.

The paper, *Soil Temperature Prior to Veraison Alters Grapevine Carbon Partitioning, Xylem Sap Hormones, and Fruit Set* was chosen as the best viticulture paper for 2020 following an evaluation of all research papers published in Volume 71 (2020) of the American Journal of Enology and Viticulture.

Each year, the [ASEV Best Paper Awards Committee](#) evaluates all manuscripts published during the previous year and selects one paper in viticulture and one in enology that reflect outstanding research and a substantial contribution to the field.

The society’s committee considered Dr Field’s paper ‘outstanding in its content’.

The authors receive a plaque and a monetary award and will present their paper during the 2021 Virtual ASEV National Conference, June 21-24 in Monterey, California, USA.

About Stewart Field

Stewart has been involved in tertiary education since 2014 – starting at Eastern Institute of Technology as a lecturer in viticulture. He was appointed to NMIT in 2018 where he continues his

passion for research and passing on his enthusiasm of viticulture to the students studying Wine and Viticulture at NMIT.

A keen interest in plants at a young age led Stewart to completing a Bachelor and Masters in Plant Science at Massey University. This led to a six-month exchange at California Polytechnic State University, (in San Luis Obispo, California, USA) where Stewart developed a curiosity of grapevines.

Stewart went on to study a doctorate in viticulture at Charles Sturt University (Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia) that also included a six-month period at Trent University (in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada).

Stewart's research focussed on grapevine physiology, predominately on the effects of irrigation and nutrition management, carbohydrate and nitrogen reserve dynamics, and plant hormones on grapevine growth and development.

In 2009 Stewart gained industry experience where he worked as a vineyard manager in the Wairarapa region and then in the Hunter Valley of Australia. After 5 years working in the industry Stewart recognised that his future happiness lay in academia.

[NMIT Winegrower's Hub](#)

NMIT has been delivering viticulture (grape growing) and winemaking programmes since 1991. There is a range of programmes from entry level certificates to degrees suitable for high school graduates, anyone wishing to change careers, or currently working in the wine industry and wanting to gain a qualification while in employment. Students can study full-time, part-time or online.

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