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Clarksburg wine grape set looks heavy

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Tim Waits' wine grape vineyard near Clarksburg, Calif., made it through the spring without getting hit by frost, a change from last year when "our district grapes were damaged pretty significantly by a late frost," says the president of the Clarksburg Wine Growers and Vintners Association.

"This year, the set looks really heavy. In fact, it looks like it will be big crop for most of us in this AVA."

Waits is also encouraged by the market for wine grapes. "It looks like the market is healthy enough and balanced enough that our growers should be able to sell all of their grapes this fall."

He planted his first wine grapes five years ago, 60 acres of Petite Syrah, and added 75 acres of Pinot Noir last year.

Establishing a new vineyard today can get expensive, so he gets at least three bids for every capital item.

Selling his first grapes last year also provided some valuable lessons. "It takes a lot of time to keep up with the market and prices and to negotiate with the wineries," Waits says.

(More information about wines and grape growers in the Clarksburg AVA is available at www.clarksburgwinegrowers.com)