



# Sauvignon Blanc

## Synonyms

In California, Fumé blanc and Savagnin Musque are used. In France, Sauvignon Jaune, Blanc Fumé, Fumé, Surin, and less commonly, Fié dans le Neuvillois, Punechon, Puinechou, and Gentin á Romorantin are used. Muskat Silvaner and Feigentraube are found in Germany.

## Source

Sauvignon blanc has been grown for several centuries in Bordeaux and the Loire Valley. The exact origin is unknown.

## Description

**Clusters:** small (occasionally medium on well-trained vines); cylindrical to globular; compact; short peduncles.

**Berries:** small; round to short oval; green-yellow when ripe; distinct “green pepper” flavor.

**Leaves:** medium; dark green; 3- to 5-lobed but overlapping lateral sinuses; U-shaped petiolar sinus; rounded teeth; leaf margin does not lay flat but is ruffled along the edge; sparse to moderate hair on lower leaf surface.

**Shoot tips:** felty white with rose margin; young leaves mostly green.

## Growth and Soil Adaptability

Vines grow vigorously in many soil types in both cool and warm regions; it is generally advisable to avoid highly fertile and deep

soils. Vine spacing should be a minimum of 6 feet. Shoots grow upright, which facilitates vertical-shoot-positioned trellises. Budbreak is after Chardonnay.

## Rootstocks

Moderate- to low-vigor rootstocks are recommended to discourage additional vegetative growth. Water stress may occur late in the season with devigorating rootstocks if the irrigation strategy does not compensate for the high water demand caused by the large vine canopy.

## Clones

Sauvignon blanc FPS 01 has a long history in California and for many years was the only registered selection available to nurseries. It came to the University of California in 1958 from Wente Vineyards with a history that indicated that it was imported in the 1800s from Chateau Yquem vineyard in France. This clone has performed well in California, but it is perhaps best known as the basis of the very successful New Zealand Sauvignon blanc industry.

Sauvignon blanc FPS 03 (Jackson), 22 (Oakville), 23 (Kendall-Jackson Winery), and 26 (Napa Valley) are all from California heritage sources. From Italy, Sauvignon blanc FPS 06 (ISV 5), 07 (ISV 2), 17 (ISV 1), and 24 (ISV 3) are now registered. In addition, the following French clones are now registered: Sauvignon blanc FPS 14 (French 316), 18 (French 317), 20 (French 242), 21 (French 378), and 25 (French 378).



## clusters

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## berries

*Small; round to short oval; green-yellow when ripe; distinct “green pepper” flavor.*

Sauvignon blanc ENTAV-INRA® 376 is available as California certified stock. Sauvignon blanc ENTAV-INRA® 241, 297, 317, and 530 are available through the trademark program. Because most of these selections have only recently become available in California, very little comparative information is available about their performance.

In California, a selection of Sauvignon blanc with muscat flavor is often referred to as Sauvignon Musque: Recent DNA analysis has shown that at least two sources of California Sauvignon Musque are the same variety as Sauvignon blanc. One selection from France is available as Sauvignon blanc FPS 27. A California field selection of Sauvignon musque has been entered into the virus testing and registration program at UC Davis and should be available in the near future as a registered selection of Sauvignon blanc.

## Production

This is a moderate-yielding variety averaging 5 to 7 tons per acre across most cool-climate sites. In warm climates, it will yield 8 to 12 tons per acre with quadrilateral cordon training.

## Harvest

**Period:** An early season variety, harvested in September.

**Method:** The compact clusters are easy to hand harvest by field workers although the peduncle is short. Any type of machine harvester easily detaches intact berries from the vine, although juicing is moderate to high.

## Training and Pruning

Head training with fruiting canes and renewal spurs is recommended due to low basal bud fertility; however, cordon training with spur pruning is common. Hedging is recommended no earlier than mid- to late July in order to avoid increasing berry size. Mechanical pre-pruning on cordon-trained vines facilitates the removal of canes that are held in the trellis wires by a large number of tendrils. Machine box pruning is successfully used in warm-climate districts.



## leaves

*Medium; dark green; 3- to 5-lobed but overlapping lateral sinuses; U-shaped petiolar sinus; rounded teeth; leaf margin does not lay flat but is ruffled along the edge; sparse to moderate hair on lower leaf surface.*





## shoot tips

*Felty white with rose margin; young leaves mostly green.*

### Trellising and Canopy Management

The fruiting wire height for a vertical-shoot-positioned system ought to be no more than 36 inches high because cane growth commonly will be no less than 48 inches long. In vigorous sites, a lyre or U-divided canopy is often used with at least a 3-foot split between canopies. Sunburn can occur on highly exposed fruit so a GDC is not recommended. Leaf removal around the clusters will enhance air movement and reduce the severity of bunch rot. However, this practice may also significantly affect fruit flavors.

### Insect and Disease Problems

Latent viruses such as corky bark and stem pitting often become apparent when field-selected budwood is taken from Sauvignon blanc vineyards planted to AXR #1 rootstock and budded or grafted to other rootstocks. Older vineyards are often infected with leafroll virus that may delay ripening. The variety is susceptible to powdery mildew and *Botrytis* bunch rot; however, canopy management practices that increase air

movement around the clusters may reduce disease severity. Cordon-trained vines are especially susceptible to *Eutypa* dieback.

### Other Cultural Characteristics

The short internode length on canes results in a large number of tendrils on each shoot. Latent shoots are common, and shoot thinning is required on all training systems. Berry drop at set may occur if vegetative growth is excessive during that period. This is commonly associated with excess nitrogen from an untimely fertilizer application or cultivation of a cover crop.

### Winery Use

As a varietal wine, Sauvignon blanc is dry or slightly sweet. It is commonly blended with Semillon. In a cooler climate it has a strong varietal character that is less pronounced in a warm area. If harvested late, or if noble rot occurs, it will produce a very sweet wine.

—Rhonda J. Smith