**Semillon**

**Synonyms**
Chevrier and Blanc doux are used in France; Greengrape in South Africa.

**Source**
Semillon is probably native to the Sauternes region of France, and it spread to other districts before the eighteenth century. It is grown throughout the world but its notoriety comes from the great white wines of Bordeaux. Semillon is typically blended with Sauvignon blanc to make both dry table wines and sweet dessert wines, including famous dessert wines from Sauternes. In California, Semillon is used in a similar fashion. It is a minor variety planted throughout the state.

**Description**
- **Clusters**: medium; conical with shoulders, well-filled to compact, often winged; strong, long, woody peduncles.
- **Berries**: medium to large; round to short oval; yellow to golden when ripe; characteristic date or fig-like taste. Some browning may occur on fully exposed fruit.
- **Leaves**: medium; 3- to 5-lobed with relatively shallow inferior lateral sinuses; U-shaped petiolar sinus; small, sharp teeth; rough surface; margin rolled under; slight tufted hair on leaf underside.
- **Shoot tips**: felty, with rose margin; young leaves yellow-green with bronze highlights.

**Growth and Soil Adaptability**
Semillon is a moderately vigorous variety with upright growth. It can be grown on a wide range of soil types. Its large clusters are prone to infection by Botrytis cinerea. Well-drained soils with moderate vigor potential are preferred. On high-vigor sites, dense canopies can lead to significant crop losses due to bunch rot.

**Rootstocks**
Semillon's moderate vigor allows for its use on any rootstock. Selection should be based on specifics of the site. When planted on poor soils, a vigorous stock such as St. George or 110R would be appropriate. On more fertile sites, Teleki 5C, 5O4, 3309C, and 101-14 Mgt are all suitable.

**Clones**
Registered selections from California vineyards include Semillon FPS 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, and ENTAV-INRA® 173. Semillon ENTAV-INRA® 315, and 380 are available. No comparative studies of these clones have been made.

**Production**
Semillon produces moderately high yields, unless it is affected by Botrytis bunch rot. For late-harvest wines, fruit is allowed to remain on the vine until Botrytis develops.
Harvest

**Period:** An early to midseason variety for table wine production. For dessert wines, Botrytis infections are desired, and harvest can occur several times over an extended period of time.

**Method:** Canopy shaking harvest is medium to hard. The soft pulp contributes to heavy juicing, especially with advanced maturity. Trunk shaking is easy to medium, with fruit removed as single berries and some cluster parts. Juicing is medium. Vertical-shoot-positioned systems improve harvestability.

Training and Pruning

Semillon should be cordon trained and spur pruned due to its large cluster size.

Trellising and Canopy Management

Semillon's upright growth lends itself to vertical-shoot-positioned systems. Only limited shoot positioning may be necessary. The use of split canopy systems should be considered only on sites with especially high-vigor potential. Leaf removal in the fruit zone can be used to improve the fruit zone microclimate and reduce the risk of Botrytis bunch rot.

Insect and Disease Problems

The large bunches are prone to Botrytis bunch rot.

Leaves

Medium: 3- to 5-lobed with relatively shallow inferior lateral sinuses; U-shaped petiolar sinus; small, sharp teeth; rough surface; margin rolled under; slight tufted hair on leaf underside.
**Other Cultural Characteristics**

The variety leafs out moderately late in spring and may escape early frost damage.

**Winery Use**

Semillon is often blended into dry Sauvignon blanc wines. Dessert wines are also produced, especially in years with considerable Botrytis bunch rot.

— Edward Weber