

# YANGARRA

ESTATE VINEYARD



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THE LAND

"Yangarra Estate depends on its bush vines. We're replacing a lot of conventional trellised vineyard with new bush vines, which seems to amuse some of our neighbours.

"Old bush vines have always been a cornerstone of Yangarra Estate viticulture. Now we're planting the old bush vines of the future. Nobody else does that.

"It's difficult getting bush vines started – we even hoe them by hand - but once they're established they seem to keep a better natural balance of wood to cane and foliage to fruit ... they're better able to naturally supply the lower yields of intense flavour that we want in the winery.

"As for biodynamics? Well, why not? Switching to rigid environmentally-responsible practice is our biggest advance.

"In 2007, we were conventional Australian grapegrowers, using systemic herbicides and fungicides - petrochemicals. Basically they were controlling the pests, but also having a huge impact on the environment and the health of the soil and the waters.

"Now, straight after vintage we put cattle or sheep in. They'll go through and graze under the vines across the whole vineyard, turning all the plant growth we don't want into fertilizer. This practice minimizes the need for under-vine slashing later in the vine growing season. In Spring we take the stock off the vineyard so they don't eat the new vine shoots.

"Now we use no herbicides at all, and the vines begin their growing season in a spread of neat, tidy pasture. The native grasses and herbs are coming back.

"We've replaced the conventional pest control regime with sprays made from natural copper and sulphur – elements that are dug from the earth.

"The bees are back in the vineyard and the frogs returned to the creeks when we turned the old regime off. The insect population is now richer, healthier and more balanced: no bug dominates.

"We even use the fish from our dams to make our own fertiliser.

"Our pruning is all detailed hand-pruned with careful spur placement so that once we get to fruiting stage, each bunch has its own space. There's no crowding. We pluck shoots and leaves so we get clean air and light around the whole bunch: the dappled effect. Light-shade, light-shade as the breezes come through. But when it's hot and still, the shade is constant.

"These techniques give our wines a better chance to reflect their particular sites. They are more individual and more expressive of their location.

"It's better: better for the land and better for the people who no longer have to handle those old chemicals."