

VESTA Student Biography: Lucas Snodgrass

By Emily Gray

One might wonder if it is possible to start an organic vineyard in the Midwest, considering the humid climate. With family support, a good mentor, and a flock of sheep, VESTA student Lucas Snodgrass is willing to give it a try

The appeal that Snodgrass finds in growing grapes and making wine began when his father decided to put in a vineyard. However, Snodgrass is going above and beyond just helping out with the family business. He and his father have visited area vineyards, read literature on starting and managing vineyards, and after discovering VESTA online, Lucas enrolled in the program.

“We didn't realize there was such a great program available. It (VESTA) fills a needed niche in the Midwest, by providing knowledgeable vineyard workers and wine makers,” Snodgrass said.

Snodgrass considers Midwest Vineyard Management, Soils for Vineyards, Wine Marketing, Integrated Pest Management and Introduction to Enology to be some of the most beneficial VESTA courses he has taken so far.



Heinrichshaus Vineyard and Winery

In addition to VESTA, Snodgrass and his father are lucky to have the assistance of Heinrich Grohe, owner and winemaker of Heinrichshaus Vineyards and Winery, located in St. James, Missouri. Grohe offered to mentor the Snodgrass's after their visiting of his winery in the early stages of their vineyard planning. He also showed them how it is possible to run a vineyard organically, despite the humid Midwest weather.

Not only has Grohe been a help to the Snodgrass's in the establishment of their vineyard, but he also served as Lucas's Field Practicum mentor during his VESTA Introduction to Viticulture course. Snodgrass notes that these hands-on field experiences are another very beneficial part of the VESTA Program.

“Doing the practicum was by far the most valuable and instructive, in my opinion,” Snodgrass said.

This opinion comes from his opportunity to work at two different vineyards for his two field practicum classes.

“Working at the two different wineries allowed me to get two different perspectives on managing a vineyard. If the VESTA classes hadn’t required the hands-on part, I might not have had the opportunity to work at two different vineyards,” Snodgrass said. “In the field, I learned what the reality is in managing a vineyard. It is time consuming and requires more thought and planning than one would think.”

Snodgrass is not afraid to make these commitments and he plans to continue his education in viticulture and enology to make his vineyard a reality. He is currently pursuing a degree in Agronomy at Missouri State University in addition to his Associate Degree in Viticulture through VESTA. With this combination, he hopes to go on to the Masters of Enology Program at the Missouri State Mountain Grove Campus.



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He believes, “With a Masters in Enology, I will have a better understanding of how to make high quality wines and will put that knowledge to use in my family’s future winery.”

This family winery is Snodgrass’s next business endeavor. Right now, they are planning to operate their vineyard organically. Snodgrass has been researching this field from sources as far away as Australia. His goal is to use only organic means of pest and fungal control and his mother also happens to have a flock of Olde English Babydoll Southdown Sheep to help mow and provide natural fertilizer for the vineyard. Besides using only organic management methods, Snodgrass has been researching growing *Vitis Vinifera* (a European grape variety) organically in Missouri to make their wine from.

Snodgrass is looking forward to continuing his studies and to his new career in the grape and wine industry.

“The most rewarding aspect of my involvement in the wine and grape industry has been the knowledge I have been able to learn from experienced wine makers and grape growers. This includes the informative VESTA instructors I had for my classes,” Snodgrass said. “Their perspective has helped me to obtain a better understanding of the best way to start and manage a vineyard.”

Knowledge is something that Snodgrass is always seeking, and he advises other VESTA students to do the same. He sees VESTA as an excellent place to start for anyone interested in growing grapes and making wine.

In his opinion, “There is always something new to learn.”

