



~ California's Ultimate Pruning Project ~

HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS at Mark West Lodge's

~ Historic Arbor ~

Spanning one side of Mark West Road to the other...

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Who: Napa Valley College Viticulture Department, Santa Rosa Junior College Viticulture Department, certified arborist Joe Branum of Joe Branum Tree Care in Calistoga, and HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS at Mark West Lodge

What: California's largest, oldest vinifera vines to be pruned by advanced viticulture students

When: Tuesday, March 22, 2005, 9:30 a.m.

Where: Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa, California

Santa Rosa, CA: Currently, there is no knowledge of any other vines in North America as large and as old as the vines at HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS at Mark West Lodge. The base of the largest of the seven giant vines is over five feet in circumference. The cordons span the entire two lane roadway, a distance of over forty feet. Dr. Stephen J. Krebs, Program Coordinator of Viticulture and Winery Technology at Napa Valley College, and Daniel Robledo, Viticulture Program Coordinator at Santa Rosa Junior College, have recruited an enthusiastic group of advanced viticulture students to volunteer their efforts to prune these historic vines. This is the first time in over a decade that these vines have been pruned. Students of these viticulture programs have gone on to become vineyard managers for some of the most prestigious vineyards in California. Valuing this symbol of America's great viticultural heritage, Krebs and Robledo will direct this sensitive pruning project to give these historic vines new health and vitality.

Dave Robertson, Deputy Director of Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works also sees the value of pruning the vines from a traffic safety standpoint. While the County provides one way traffic control on the busy road, the pruners will use specialized lift equipment to reach the vines that tower more than twenty feet above the roadway. Completing the effort, HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS at Mark West Lodge Proprietor Jack Martin has also arranged for the assistance of certified arborist Joe Branum, of Joe Branum Tree Care in Calistoga, California. Branum will be on site, providing additional expertise, manpower, and equipment.

Proud custodian of these vines, Martin is very excited to provide this long awaited care. The vines were originally planted when the facility was a stage-coach stop for carriages coming and going from San Francisco. They have spanned Mark West Springs Road since the late 1800's, when the arbor was touted as the largest in the world. Built as part of the lodge when the road leading to it was only a dirt path, the arbor has been featured in Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not. Modern life and traffic continued to pass under the historic structure while the vines ran wild for over a century and a half.

According to Jack Martin, "We've completely reinvented the Northern California event facility Mark West Lodge (now known as HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS). Now we need to do justice to these gnarly, old vines that have been here since the beginning of California's wine industry. They've survived against insurmountable odds, including phylloxera in the late 1800s and Mark West Lodge's historic fire of 1979. Finally, they'll be getting the attention they deserve and will refresh the roadway, while providing a brief moment of enjoyment as people continue to pass under this historic archway."

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