



## Organic Management of the Vineyards of Jean-Luc Colombo in Cornas

Jean-Luc Colombo and his family live in the heart of their hillside vineyards in Cornas and consider it a point of honour to cultivate and maintain their vineyards with respect for their environment. They want to preserve the natural biodiversity of Cornas and promote the indigenous flora and fauna.

Since 2012, Domaine Colombo is committed to attaining ECOCERT certification attesting to their organic agriculture. The official certification will be effective for the 2015 vintage.

### Management of the soils according to the specificity of each vineyard

- **Mulch** composed of the crushed bark from leafy trees is used to cover the soil. This mulch is 5 cm thick in order to protect the soil from erosion, to limit the hydric stress due to grass growth which competes with vines, and to maintain a living soil with its microbial life and good humidity.
- **Mowing** (manual and mechanical).
- **Working the soil**: mechanical (griffon, moto-hoeing, superficial tilling between the rows, winch); use of a plow horse; manual hoeing when too steep.
- **Grass**: we try to protect the natural grass of the vineyard in order to preserve the proper biodiversity.
- **No irrigation** favours deep rooting of the vines to draw upon the entire and true expression of the *terroir*, and also respects the uniqueness of the vintage (the effects of the sun + rain).



Mulch from bark fragments atop the soil



Working the soil with a winch



Working the soil with the help of a horse

### Biodiversity and countryside Management

- **Preservation** and planting of local varieties along the edges of the vineyards promotes **biodiversity** of the fauna and flora, which is conducive to the sanitary health of the vines and other life in the vineyards.



Rural edges promote biodiversity

- **Manual maintenance** of embankments and walls (trimming, cleaning, and maintaining the local flora).



Construction of a dry stone wall

- Construction of dry stone walls to favour the natural flow of the soil and to preserve the landscape.
- In winter, addition of manure (partly coming from the 2 donkeys of the Domaine) and compost of organic crushed plants and leafy trees to develop and maintain good microbial life in the soil.

#### **Working the green vegetation**

- Fastening and tying-up the vines is done with biodegradable products (straw rope and wooden hooks).
- Little or no trimming is done in order to favour the **natural regulation** of the vines.

#### **Prophylactic actions**

- Nettle tea (regulates and stimulates the growth of the vines).
- Horsetail tea (dries the environment around the leaves and so preserves the vines from cryptogamic diseases).
- Decoction of ferns to keep away insects (such as the leafhopper).

#### **Phytosanitary Treatments**

- Treatments are carried out at **the right time** to reduce the doses of copper considering both the weather (wind, rain) and the pressure of the disease (treating only when the pressure is very high).
- Treating only with **organically-certified products** (copper and sulphur).
- Reduction of the use of copper in order not to pollute the soil.
- Fewer treatments to **reduce the carbon footprint** (a backpack pump is used for accuracy and because it is not possible to treat the vineyards mechanically due to their steepness).
- Tanks are rinsed in the vineyard to avoid the pollution of the collective water system.
- Containers of phyto-sanitary products are rinsed, sorted, and then picked up by the supplier for **recycling**.

## **Bee Helpful !**

Jean-Luc and Anne have a strong connection with bees. At the Colombo homestead, **4 beehives are in place in the Cornas vineyard**, making honey. The first Colombo vineyard, purchased in 1986, is named Les Ruchets, which means “The Beehives,” in honour of the bee colonies found on the property. In turn, Les Abeilles (The Bees) is named for these mysterious creatures that inhabit the vineyards where this Côtes du Rhône is produced.

Jean-Luc Colombo’s appreciation for the natural environment of living creatures creates an atmosphere in which insects, animals and grapevines co-exist and flourish. This can only be accomplished with organic vineyard practices where no harsh pesticides are used. Honeybees pollinate more than 90% of flowering crops – including many of the fruit and food items we eat – so they play a vital role in our food supply. In many places around the world, however, bee colonies are in severe jeopardy. “Colony Collapse Disorder” is a mysterious 5-year-old crisis – and it’s worsening at an alarming rate!

To help fight this bee crisis, the Colombos have created the JLC “Bee Helpful” program in the US and UK, with donations going to several organizations dedicated to research and development of methods to bring back the honeybee colonies.



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