

THE VOICE OF THE WINE INDUSTRY

WINES & VINES

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Tips on Buying Vineyard Equipment and Supplies

Large pieces of equipment such as tractors and mechanical harvesters are frequently bought from dealers handling a particular manufacturer's brand, while commonly used items such as pruning shears are widely available at garden centers or other stores. In vineyard country a wider selection may be carried at the local branch of a chain such as Agway.

Businesses that specialize in selling vineyard equipment and supplies may do up to 90% of their business by mail or telephone. Their catalogs generally list items in greatest demand as well as newer products that are considered to offer good value. The expertise offered by a specialty business should include a working knowledge of the kinds of equipment or supplies required to do a particular job or quantities that would be needed, for example, to plant four or five acres of grapes. Don't expect specific advice on how to care for a vineyard, however, because there are too many variables from one site to another.

If you are a newcomer to the vineyard, it should be noted that for your own benefit as well as the supplier's, it is helpful to plan ahead. By forecasting the scale of your operation before you plant, for instance, you can buy the correct size tractor, one that is neither too big nor too small.

Arrangements may sometimes be made for heavy or bulky items to be shipped directly to the customer from a nearby manufacturer. If machinery with moving parts is ordered, the question of servicing should be discussed. Parts should be available for shipping within 24 hours. Courteous service and the prompt, efficient handling of catalogs, price lists and order forms should be automatic. It is always best to know the principals in the business and be able to trust their opinions. In no way is it unusual for an out-of-state customer to visit a supplier, but it is wise to call ahead and say you are coming.