Major Wine Producing Countries

Is Napa running out of land for vineyards?

Planting new vineyards in Napa today is no easy feat. Ninety-one percent of the county’s acreage is under some form of protection from development, whether zoned as Agricultural Preserve or Agriculture, Watershed and Open Space. What constitutes “development” has shifted over time. The act setting up the Ag Preserve, passed in 1968, positioned Napa land’s “highest and best use” as agricultural, as opposed to commercial real estate. But in recent years “development” has come to include agriculture itself. The valley floor is considered ‘planted out. The remaining plantable land is largely in Napa’s hillsides, which are under strict regulation to prevent erosion — soon potentially even stricter, if voters pass a proposed ballot measure that would severely limit future oak woodlands removal. More and more, it looks like very little of Napa County’s virgin land may ever be destined for grapevines.

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Technology

Robo-picker grasps and packs

New robotic system could lend a hand with warehouse sorting and other picking or clearing tasks.

Unpacking groceries is a straightforward albeit tedious task: You reach into a bag, feel around for an item, and pull it out. A quick glance will tell you what the item is and where it should be stored. Now engineers from MIT and Princeton University have developed a robotic system that may one day lend a hand with this household chore, as well as assist in other picking and sorting tasks, from organizing products in a warehouse to clearing debris from a disaster zone.

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