

# Marlborough Boys College creates a first

By Andrew Ritchie

Marlborough Boys College has become the first school in New Zealand to offer a course in viticulture, which counts towards the National Certificate in Viticulture.

Head of the Land Science department at the college, Gary Ytsma started the level 3 course with the assistance of the NZ Horticultural Training Organisation.

"It is important that the course is of use to boys in their transition from school to the workforce or onto further qualifications."

The course also counts towards NCEA accreditation and is geared around someone who will be able to manage groups of vineyard workers and who is qualified to make management decisions in the vineyard.

Some 11 years ago Gary had a similar idea based on his personal knowledge and experience of the Forestry industry. The first course ran in 1999 and since then he has taken approximately 250 year 12 and 13 students through the Level 2 and 3 FITEC forestry units. Gary thinks it is important to educate students for real life; "I believe



Marlborough Boys College students enjoy a day in the vineyard carrying out disease and pest analysis

it's the way education should go, especially for those who will not go on to tertiary education. It makes them work ready and useful to the industry."

He has found that the local forest and wood industry have been particularly interested in the course and have been keen to employ students, after they leave school. Two boys have gone on to start up their

own silviculture business and are themselves employing between 6 to 8 staff.

Currently there are 22 boys on the viticultural course and Gary has had great support from WineResearch as well as wineries such as Lawsons and Delegates.

"Within ten minutes we can have a group in a vineyard relating what has been

learnt in the classroom to the practical side of field work. One of the recent field trips involved students in pre-harvest bunch assessment.

Here the boys record the incidence of botrytis, bird damage and other pest and disease issues among the bunches."

Approximately 35% of the 1000 boys at the college are bused into school

from rural areas of the district and a significant number come from families engaged in agricultural activities.

Agricultural courses begin with an option class for years 10 and 11. This can be followed by courses in subsequent years covering agricultural safety, general farm management and specialist courses in forestry and viticulture.