

Quick Guide Grapes

Where to plant:

- Plant in full sun, well drained, fertile soil
- They are self pollinating but a second plant will help with cross pollination and greater yield
- Before you plant, check your soil pH; ideally the soil needs a pH between 6.2-6.8.
- Avoid planting in extremely heavy or very poorly drained soil
- Mulching is not recommended for grapes because mulch will keep the soil temperature too cool. Grape vines grow best in warmer soil. (You can protect them over the winter but remove the mulch in spring.)
- Grapevines need support or they will trail along the ground (Arbor, existing fence...). Virtually any type of support structure will do, provided it is sturdy. Grape vines grow quickly and get quite heavy!

Watering:

- After planting, water the vines regularly throughout the first year. The root system must grow and establish to allow shoot growth in the first year. Young plants require about ½ to 1 inch of water per week, depending on rainfall, for the first two years during the growing season.
- Apply water only to the root zone.
- Avoid getting grape foliage wet as this can encourage many grape diseases.
- Reduce watering young vines in the fall to encourage the plant to harden-off its canes to prepare for winter.

Fertilizing:

- Always test your soil before applying fertilizer; always apply fertilizer according to the package directions.
- Organic fertilizers such as fish emulsion, compost, crab meal are recommended.
- The first two or three years, each early spring, apply compost around the base of the vines. Grape vines grow vigorously and might need a nutrient boost each year.
- Keep grass and other plants from growing under grapevines. This allows the soil to heat up early in the spring and maintain higher soil temperatures to encourage growth.

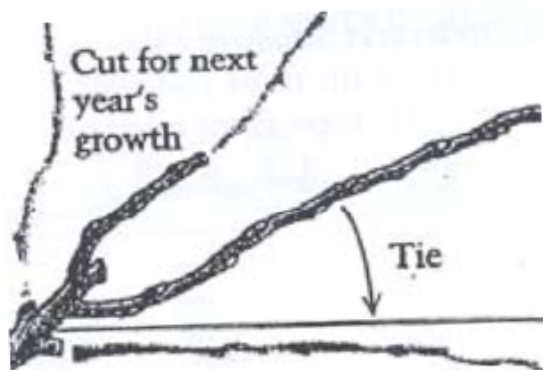
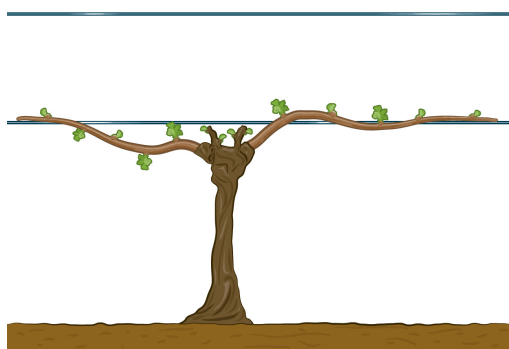
Pruning:

- Grape vines need pruning - the most common mistake when pruning is actually not to prune.
- Prune every winter when the grapes are fully dormant to keep them in check and train onto supports (if it's too warm the sap will bleed)
- Once fully trained, the main trunk of the vine is left alone, and the yearly pruning focuses only on the side shoots.
- Grapes produce fruit on lateral shoots on 1-year-old canes

2 Types of pruning:

- **Cane pruning (aka Guyot System):** (suitable for cooler climate regions)
 - The vines are planted in rows and trained along horizontal wires
 - This is a 'renewal' training system, where the fruiting side-branches are pruned out every winter, and new ones trained horizontally to replace them and carry the coming summer's crop.
 - Fruit-bearing shoots sprout from these horizontal arms and are trained upwards between the wires above through spring and summer. The horizontal arm(s) are then pruned out every winter and replacements trained in.
 - Cane pruning involves pruning annually to remove all growth except two whole canes from the previous growing season and two other canes each cut back to a spur with two buds.
- The whole canes will produce fruiting shoots for next season and the spurs will form replacement canes for the following season.

Guyot Double



- **Spur pruning:** Spurs are created by cutting all side branches on the lateral arms to two buds in late winter. Two new shoots grow on the spur you leave, and each produces a cluster of fruit. (Commonly seen in warmer climates)

Removing flowers and fruit:

With newly planted grapevines, for the first two years after planting, remove all the flowers so the plant's energy goes into getting well established. You can improve the size, sweetness and quality of grapes by reducing the number of grapes per bunch. Reducing the number of grapes allows better ripening and improves air circulation.

Harvesting:

Grapes ripen from late summer to late autumn, depending on the variety and weather conditions. They are ready for picking when they feel soft and taste sugary. The skin of white grapes often changes from deep green to translucent yellow and becomes much thinner. But the best way to tell when grapes are ripe is by tasting them – harvest them only when they're at their sweetest, as they won't ripen any further once picked.

Cut the whole bunch with the stalk still attached.