

Grape Growing Care & Culture

Grapes have a long & abundant history. While they've grown wild since prehistoric times, evidence suggests they were cultivated in Asia as early as 5000 BC. The grape played a role in numerous stories, being referred to as the "fruit of the vine." Grapes were also pictured in hieroglyphics in ancient Egyptian burial tombs. During the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, grapes were revered for their use in winemaking. They were planted in the Rhine Valley in Germany, a place of notable wine production, in the 2nd century AD. Around this time, over 90 varieties of grapes were already known.

LOCATION

Always plant in the sunniest, south-east or south-west facing location. Wine grapes particularly need full sun in order to produce grapes with a high enough sugar content to produce wine.

SOIL TYPE

A sandy loam soil is the best medium to grow grapes in. Don't grow grapes on really wet soil that won't drain (puddles on surface that won't disappear after the rain). If the soil contains a lot of clay throw half of it away and mix the remainder with sand and loam to loosen it up and improve drainage.

PLANTING

Wine grapes should be planted 1m apart in south facing rows with 2-2.5 feet between rows facing north and south. Seedless table grapes should be planted a minimum of 5 to 6 feet apart. Potted grapes can be planted any time whereas bare root grapes must be planted while the vines are still dormant (usually in the fall).

FERTILIZING

Grapevines like soil which is only slightly acidic (pH 6 to 6.5). Soils which are neutral or alkaline trap the essential trace elements zinc and iron resulting in stunted plants. Too much nitrogen results in wippy, soft easy to snap canes which don't go properly dormant in winter. Good sources of these nutrients include dolomite lime, wood ashes, compost, fish fertilizer, trace elements, phosphate, bone meal and seaweed. When planting fertilize with dolomite, bonemeal plus ¼ cup trace elements, from the organic product Green Sand. Fertilize established plants in spring with 4+20+20 and don't fertilize past mid-summer.

WATERING

Water grapevines in well when planted. Water well during the first few weeks after planting and then only in extreme drought conditions. Overwatering can cause grapes to split. Try not to water the leaves as this can cause a variety of fungal problems.

PRUNING GRAPEVINES (the first 4 years)

YEAR 1 : In the summer allow 2 to 3 buds to grow shoots. In February/March after frost is over prune the plant back to 3 or 4 buds. Don't worry about the amount of growth. The purpose of first year growth is to develop a healthy root system.

YEAR 2 : Allow 3 to 4 buds to grow 2-5 cm shoots and keep the two strongest vertically pointing shoots separated by at least 2 cm from each other at their base. Tie them gently to a post or stake and pinch out lateral side shoots as they appear to 1 leaf on the lateral. This makes the 2 shoots grow long, thick and straight without becoming bushy. The purpose of the second year growth is to develop shoots (canes which are at least 2 m long and as thick as a pencil).

YEAR 3 : Once the canes are pencil thick, keep the one that gives the strongest straightest trunk and cut the other one off. Bend the remaining cane so that it can be wrapped horizontally and tied gently with plastic twist ties around a horizontal steel wire at least 0.75m off the ground. Let 8 to 12 shoots form from the horizontal section of the tied cane and rub out all other shoots especially those which are closest to the ground or appear to grow upside down from the horizontal cane. After flowerset in late June/early July pinch out lateral side shoots growing from new canes bearing fruit clusters back to 1 leaf per side shoot (summer pruning). This pruning improves sugar levels, flavour, disease control and ventilation.

YEAR 4 : Wine Grapes – In February bend one or two of the new vertical canes horizontally to replace the old "horizontal cane from year 3. Cut out the old cane within 2cm of the new replacements which are again wrapped and tied to the wire. To develop maximum flavour, good winter hardiness, high sugar content and low acid levels never let more than 40 clusters of grapes grow on the vine.
Seedless Table Grapes - In February cut vertical shoots back to 10cm at least 7cm apart and let up to 2 new vertical shoots grow from each of these spurs. In year 5 cut these "2 spur canes" back to 1 spur so that the number of spurs stays the same.

Grape cultivars available at GARDENWORKS

The following listing describes some of the varieties of grapes available at GardenWorks. We hope that our listing will help you make an informed decision. If there is a grape on this list that you wish to include in your garden, but can't find it at your local GARDENWORKS store, please tell one of our staff members; they may be able to order it in for you.

GRAPE 'BUFFALO' - Vigorous vine with heavy regular fruit production. Medium sized, blue/black grapes. Spicy sweet. Early to ripen. Disease resistant - requires no spraying. Excellent for table use, jam, juice or wine.

GRAPE 'CAMPBELL EARLY' - High quality large clusters of dark purplish-black grapes. Ripens 10 – 20 days before Concord. Produces better in a cooler climate. Makes excellent fresh juice.

GRAPE 'CANADICE' (seedless) - A reliable, productive seedless red grape of outstanding quality. Large well filled clusters on a vigorous, low maintenance vine. Excellent table grape; fine for juice and wines.

GRAPE 'CHARDONNAY' - Outstanding quality of fruit used in making Chablis to Burgundy type dry white wines. Vigorous vine. One of the hardiest of wine grapes. White grape; excellent in cooler areas.

GRAPE 'CONCORD' (Table/American) - Most popular grape in coastal B.C. Produces 20 pounds or more of grapes oblong, blue-black seeded grapes. Resistant to powdery mildew. Ripens in late September. Grarape 'Gewurtztramtraminerer' - Spicy pink - red grape produces a unique aromatic spicy whit wine of excellent quality. Produces a moderate crop of early, high quality white wine grapes.

GRAPE 'GEWURTZTRAMINER' (Table/American) - Seedless blue grapes with a slight blueberry flavour. Ripens in early October. A mildew resistant variety.

GRAPE 'HIMROD' (Seedless) - A vine of excellent quality that bears small, greenish white seedless grapes. Ripens in late September to early October. One of the most disease resistant varieties.

GRAPE 'LAKEMONT' - Vigorous heavily productive vine. Tight clusters of seedless crisp, juicy yellowish green fruit. Ripens 10-20 days before Concord. Excellent flavour and quality.

GRAPE 'MARECHAL FOCH' (aka. Foch, Kuhlmann 188-2) Marechal Foch is a vigorous, early-ripening variety, with good winter hardiness. It is well suited to cold-climate regions in Marechal Foch is often considered to possess Burgundian characteristics, having a vibrant, deep purple color, with a light-medium structure and dark berry fruit characteristics. Some tasters find the similarities to Burgundy Pinot Noir become more pronounced with age. Perhaps an argument for why the grape clings to a few acres in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

GRAPE 'EARLY MUSCAT'

The Muscat grape is the world's oldest known grape variety. Muscat is the only grape to produce wine with the same aroma as the grape itself. Sweet fortified Muscats have a classic rich, nose of dried fruits, raisins and oranges. This strong perfume prompted the Roman author Pliny, in his "Natural History," to declare it "the grape of the bees." The French noted the grape's musky character and called it "Musqué,"

GRAPE 'NIAGRA' (Table/American) - Large, greenish white crisp grapes. Easy to grow. Ripens in early October. Great for eating fresh, making into wine, or squeezing into juice.

GRAPE 'PINOT NOIR' (Wine/French) - This vine requires a very warm planting location in order to produce fruit. Ripens in early October. A premium red wine grape.

GRAPE 'STEUBEN' - This vine produces very large, perfectly formed long slender clusters of high quality blue-black grapes. Exceedingly productive vines, resistant to mildew and rot.

GRAPE 'SUFFOLK' (Table/European) - This vine bears red, seedless grapes of medium size. Excellent for fresh eating or making into juice. Ripens in early October.

GRAPE 'VANESSA'

The characteristic that separates Vanessa from other seedless grapes is its crisp texture. Vanessa has attractive, medium-sized clusters that are well filled with red berries. Its taste is mild, but its texture is superior to other commonly available cultivars.

Like the other seedless types, Vanessa does require winter protection in colder areas.

