



GRAPES

FROM THE
ANDERSON'S
FRUIT GROWING GUIDE
BY MARK ANDERSON

GRAPES

Grapes are easy to grow and, with a little effort, the home gardener will be rewarded with large crops of fruit perfect for wine, jams and fresh eating. Not only do grapes provide an amazing bounty for our tables and wine cellars, but they can also be used effectively as an ornamental vine of stunning beauty. Fall colors, colorful fruits, and a unique shaped leaf make this vine a perfect addition to any yard. A single grape vine can produce enough growth every year (up to 8-10 feet in multiple directions) to arch over a walk, cover an arbor, fill in a fence to block out the neighbors, or even provide dense shade over a deck or terrace.

While grapes grow nearly everywhere in the country, certain varieties are more adapted to specific regions. Grapes are long lived (up to 100 years and more) and are yearly producers. Although, they can sometimes take up to 4-5 years to yield a full harvest, most gardeners believe the wait is worth it. All grapes are self-fertile and do not need a pollinizer. Though many are classified as USDA zone 5, most grapes are still hardy enough for zone 4, but will need some winter protection if exposed directly to cold winter winds.

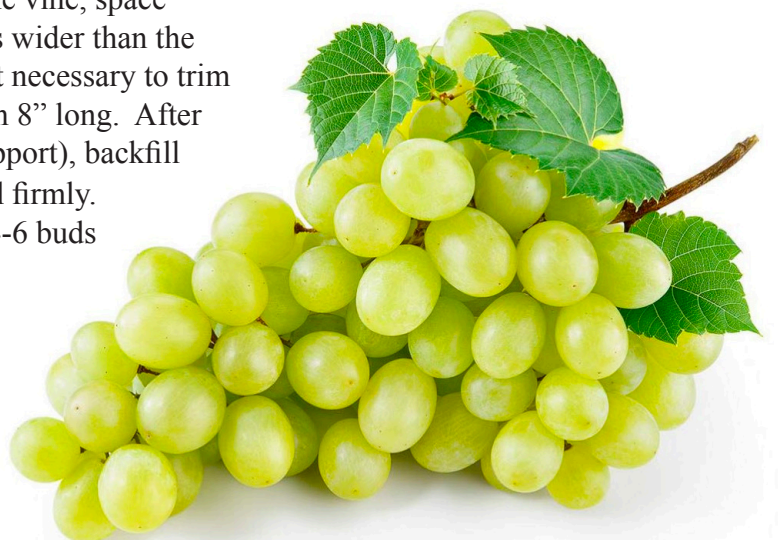
Location: Grapes prefer an open space, full sun, and something to grow on for support. While not ideal, grapes can still grow and produce in partial shade (preferably morning).

Soil: Grape vines need fertile, loose, loamy soil with good drainage. If necessary, amend the soil before planting with a well composted, organic soil conditioner containing finely ground bark and other natural soil conditioners. The conditioner should make up 25% of the soil used to fill the hole. Avoid using composted manures of any type.

Support: Grapevines can be grown on a trellis, arbor, chain-link or rail fence, or even just on sturdy posts with guide wires between them. Make sure the support is strong enough to hold the weight of the vines and the bunches of fruit. To build a custom wire trellis big enough for two vines, set two stout posts in the ground 15-20 feet apart; posts should be 5-6 feet tall above the soil. Set two smaller posts 4-5 feet from the end posts to support the young vines – plant a vine next to each of these smaller posts. String a galvanized wire between the two taller posts at 2.5 feet high and again at 5 feet.

Planting: Select healthy 1 or 2-year-old plants, either bare-root or established in containers. Before planting, soak the bare-root plants in water or a natural root stimulator like Kangaroots (from BushDoctor) for 24-36 hours to rehydrate the roots. If planting more than one vine, space plants about 10-15 feet apart. Dig the holes 2-3 times wider than the root system, but not deeper than 6-12 inches. It is not necessary to trim the roots, but if necessary, don't trim them to less than 8" long. After planting (angle the main cane slightly towards the support), backfill with the soil/compost mixture and tamp down the soil firmly. Trim the newly planted cane back 2-3 buds, leaving 4-6 buds on the plant.

Water: Once established, grapes need to be watered regularly (about once every 5-8 days) with a drip or soaker system. Grapes are prone to fungal diseases, so avoid splashing or sprinkling water on the leaves.



Fertilizer: Fertilize each spring with a balanced fertilizer for fruits, like 16-16-16, Fruit, Citrus and Nut Food from Fertilome or Natural Guard Organic Fruit & Citrus Food. Grapes tend to develop iron chlorosis in alkaline or high pH soils, so amending the soil with a chelated iron or a sulfur/iron combination will help prevent an iron deficiency.

Pruning and Training: During the first summer after planting, let the vine grow at will. The first winter, select the sturdiest shoot to form the trunk, attach it to the support, and trim it back to 3-4 buds and remove all the other growth. In Spring, once the buds have grown 6-8 inches, select the most vigorous upright one to continue as the trunk. Next, select 2 side shoots for the side arms which will grow outwards horizontally at about 2.5 feet high. At the end of the second summer, when the trunk reaches about 5 feet high, cut the tip and choose 2 side shoots for another set of lateral arms. During the second winter, pinch back the arms to about 10 inches long, and prune off all remaining growth on the trunk and arms. The third summer, allow the vine to grow horizontally from the arms, but remove all growth from the trunk. After the third year, prune yearly with either the spur or cane method depending on variety.

Spur Pruning begins in the third winter. Remove any weak side shoots from the arms and leave the strongest shoots spaced at 6-10 inches apart, trimming each to two buds. Each spur will produce two fruit-bearing shoots during the next growing season. Every winter thereafter, remove the lower shoot on each spur and cut the upper shoot back to 2 buds. Those buds will develop into shoots that bear fruit the following summer.

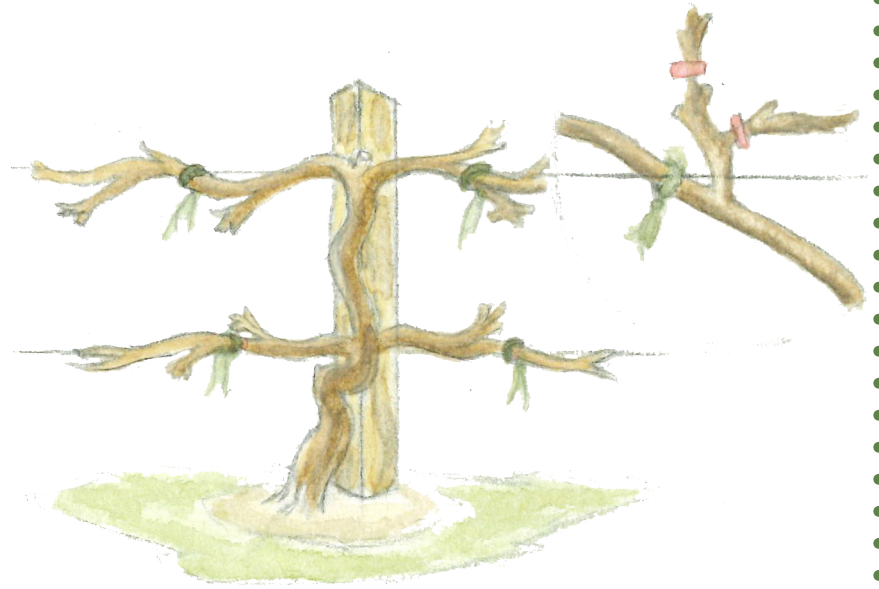
Cane pruning also begins in the third winter. Select one strong lateral shoot near the trunk on each arm, and cut it back to 2 buds, and these will become the renewal spurs for next season. Select another strong lateral near the trunk on each arm. Cut it back to about 12 buds and attach it to the support. Remove all the other shoots. The 12 buds will produce fruiting canes in the summer. The following winter remove the fruiting canes entirely and replace them with the two strongest shoots from the spurs left in the spring. Cut each to 12 buds and attach them to the support; select the two next-best shoots as renewal spurs and trim them back to 2 buds. Remove all the other shoots.



Harvest & Yield: In late summer to late fall, when the grapes are sweet to the taste and fully colored, cut the bunches from the vines. Be careful not to harvest too soon, as the grapes stop ripening at the moment of harvest. Yields vary depending on variety but can range from 5-30lbs after the 4th year.

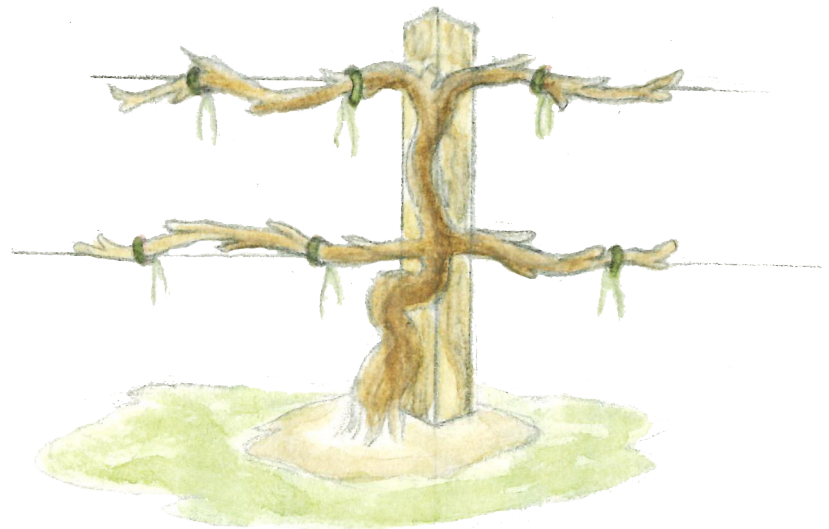
Pests: Powdery mildew is the most common disease to affect grape vines and is easily controlled with a general(-)purpose fungicide like Copper Soap, F-Stop by Fertilome, or Complete Disease control from Monterey. Aphids, leaf hoppers, whitefly and spider mites are the most common pests to attack grapes. Spinosad Soap, malathion, and Triple Action by Fertilome can control all these pests after a few applications.

Storage: Store grapes unwashed (moisture speeds up the decay process) in a ventilated plastic bag in the refrigerator. The fruit will shrivel and even start to ferment at room temperature.



Spur Pruning

Spur pruning is recommended for most European grapes. Remove the lower shoot and cut upper shoots back to 2 buds.



Cane Pruning

Cane pruning is recommended for most American grapes and also for a few varieties of European grapes. In winter, remove the fruiting canes and replace them with the 2 strongest shoots from spurs left in the spring.

CANADICE

This seedless red grape is a mid-season cultivar that ripens about mid-August to September. It is a sweet grape with a little bit of a spicy flavor. They come in compact clusters with medium sized individual grapes. They are good both as table grapes and ideal for canning and freezing. Canadice can produce the first year and will produce bigger, better clusters every subsequent year even after hard winters. Medium resistance to black rot. Somewhat susceptible to mildews.

Zones: 4-8.



CONCORD

Concords are one of the most well-known grapes grown in the US. These grapes have a purple-black skin with a bluish “bloom” or powder on the skin which can be rubbed off; the flesh is pulpy and green. They have a robust flavor that, along with their size, make them perfect for juices, jams, jellies, etc... Grapes do best when trellised and with at least 8 hours of sunlight. Zones 5-8

Seedless

Seedless Concord is nearly the same as seeded as far as flavor, texture, and plant size. The fruit of the seedless are slightly smaller than the seeded and the fruit matures about a week earlier.



GLENORA

A mouthwatering medium-size grape with full-bodied flavor and rich aroma. Fine for wine and superb for snacking. This gourmet quality grape is vigorous and highly productive. Blue-black fruit makes a luscious jelly. Glenora are fine textured with smooth skins and keep well on the vine. They are hardy enough for zone 4 but should have some protection in exposed sites. Harvest in mid-August.

Zones: 5-8



HIMROD

Himrod is one of the finest seedless green grapes out there. Clusters are large and full of small-medium, green-gold grapes. Its delectable crisp, sweet flavor makes it perfect for fresh eating and drying for raisins. Himrod will need some protection in exposed sites in zone 4. This is a tough plant that, once established, only needs occasional watering. Highly productive. Harvest in late-August.

Zones: 5-8



INTERLAKEN

This green seedless grape is slightly hardier than Himrod with tight, full clusters of sweet, fleshy grapes. It is fantastic for fresh eating. Interlaken is not as vigorous as other grapes, but is a little hardier and better suited to colder climates and still produces heavily. Said to be one of the best for yellow raisins and also freezes well. Interlaken ripens early to mid-August (one of the earliest to ripen).

Zones: 5-8



JUPITER

This grape is a very large red-blue seedless grape. Its flavor is considered one of the absolute best among table grapes. The grapes are crisp and sweet with a muscat (wine-like) flavor. They are non-skinskin that is somewhat thin. While they are fairly hardy (becoming more hardy as they're established) they should still be protected during zone 4 winters. Jupiter has shown consistent cropping at the end of July – August. Moderate resistance to fungus.

Zones: 5-8



KING OF THE NORTH

This is a hardy, blue grape that is fantastic for juice, jelly, wine, and fresh though it has fairly high-acids, so use as a table grape is limited, although the juice is delicious. The medium sized fruit grow on vigorous, highly disease resistant vines. They are a juicy, tart berry that sweetens when fully ripe. These are highly productive plants.

Zones: 4-8



LAKEMONT

Lakemont is a smaller grape than others, but what it lacks in size it makes up for in sweetness. These crisp, juicy, seedless grapes are a fine addition to any vineyard. They are vigorous, easy to grow, and disease resistant. Clusters are very large, well-filled to compact, and quite handsome. Ripens in late August.

Zones: 5- 8



NEPTUNE

Neptune is a beautiful, white table grape with a delicious fruity flavor and non-slip skin; they are some of the largest white grapes produced. It is resistant to cracking, even under the worst conditions, and moderately resistant to fungal diseases. In large, conical clusters, they make beautiful additions to fruit baskets or centerpieces. Disease-resistant and cold-tolerant. Ripens in early September.

Hardiness Zones: 5a-8



RED SUFFOLK

This is a red, seedless, dessert variety of grape with crisp, tasty berries. The tender-skinned grapes ripen mid-September a few weeks earlier than Concord. It is somewhat susceptible to mold, but otherwise disease free. Hardy to Zone 5 when heavily mulched during the winter.



RELIANCE

Reliance is one of the best grapes available today. It's fantastic flavor and melt-in-your-mouth texture is often rated highest amongst other table grapes. It is incredible hardy (down to -30). The pink berries are small to medium in size and set on medium to large clusters. These are a slipskin variety that ripens August. Reliance is great for jellies, jams, and juices. Moderate fungus resistance. Stores up to three months!

Zones: 4-8



SOMERSET

Another fantastic grape for Northern climates. Somerset is very disease resistant, but can be susceptible to powdery mildew if not sprayed preventatively. The berries have a strawberry-like flavor and can be harvested in August, but will be much sweeter when they're fully red. They are medium in size and set heavily on small-medium clusters. The grapes ripen reliably even in poor conditions. Somerset is rapidly becoming one of America's new favorite grapes.

Zones: 4-8



THOMCORD

Thomson Seedless and Concord are the proud parents of this sweet, juicy grape bringing you the best of both worlds into one. It has a Concord flavor that is offset by the mild, sweet flavor of Thomson. These vines do well in hot, dry weather and are tolerant of powdery mildew. Ripens in August.

Zones: 5-9



MARQUIS

Giant clusters of large, juicy white grapes. Excellent for fresh eating as well as for making jams and jellies. Does prefer a slightly more acidic soil than other varieties. Robust vines produce large crops that ripen in September.

Zones: 5-9.



Written by Mark Anderson
with contributions from
Amy Windholz, Jackie Balls, & Jodie Moser

Compiled 2021

Layout and Composition by
Kourtney Neuenswander

Illustrations by
Ron Hildebrand, Frank Hildebrand,
& Emelia Anderson

Photos from
Amazon, C&O Nursery, Dave Wilson Nursery,
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One Green World, Pexels, & Van Well Nursery



ANDERSON'S SEED & GARDEN
69 West Center Street Logan, UT • (435) 752-2345