

Caring for Grapes



Two major types of grapes, American and European, are available to fruit growers. American grapes are slip-skin grapes, meaning the pulp slides easily out of the skin. They have soft flesh and a distinctive flavor and aroma. American grapes are hardy to well below 0 degrees, and are resistant to many insects and diseases. They also mature early in the season.

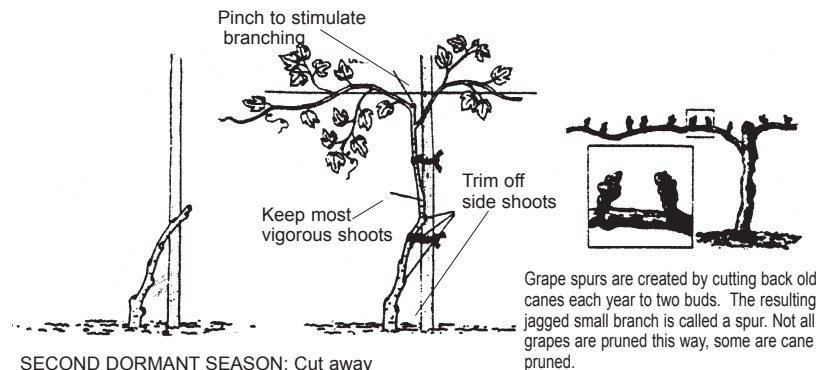
European grapes differ from American grapes in fruit, vine and climate adaptation. Fruit are firm with nonslip skin and relatively mild flavor. Compared to American grapes, which prefer a more humid, cooler climate, European grapes have a defined heat requirement and usually prefer a long, warm growing season. European grapes are hardy to 5 degrees. They produce vigorous, upright growth that normally requires trellising.

American and French hybrid grapes are intermediate between American and European varieties. Most premium wines are made from European grapes.

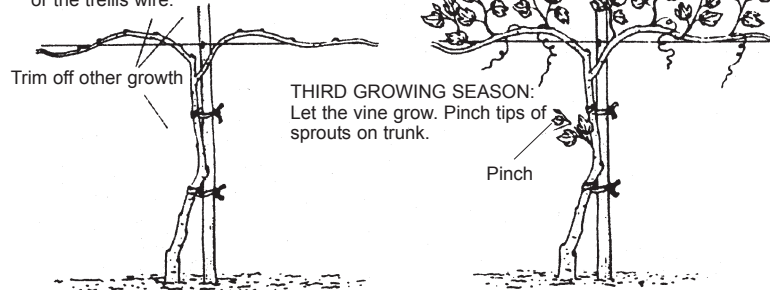
SOIL & NUTRIENTS - Grapes are adapted to a wide range of soil types, as long as soil is well drained. A soil rich in organic matter is by far the best. You can encourage growth by adding an organic supplement at planting time and mulching the roots afterwards. Mature vines are deep rooted and require only occasional watering. However, they should not be allowed to dry out. Watering well prior to harvest will increase fruit size. Grapes only need to be fed organic all purpose fertilizer (3 lbs per 100 sq ft) and may not always need that. If the leaves yellow and there is little growth in the early part of the season, they definitely need feeding.

PRUNING - There are two ways to prune mature vines. The method used depends on the variety. European and wine grapes are spur pruned. While American and 'Thompson Seedless' require cane pruning. Knowing the variety of your grape is very helpful in selecting the pruning method. Either variety can be trained to an arbor.

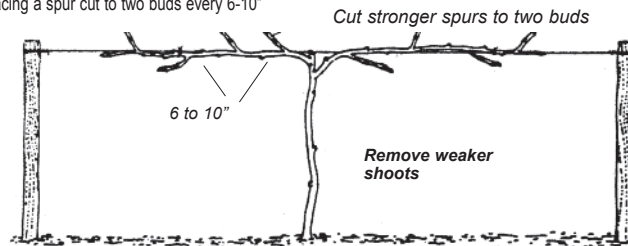
HARVESTING & STORAGE - As grapes mature, they become less acidic and noticeably sweeter, taking on their characteristic colors and flavors. Red or black varieties rapidly change color. Green varieties become yellowish or whitish. Maturity may be checked by tasting a few berries. To harvest, cut entire clusters from a vine rather than pulling them off.



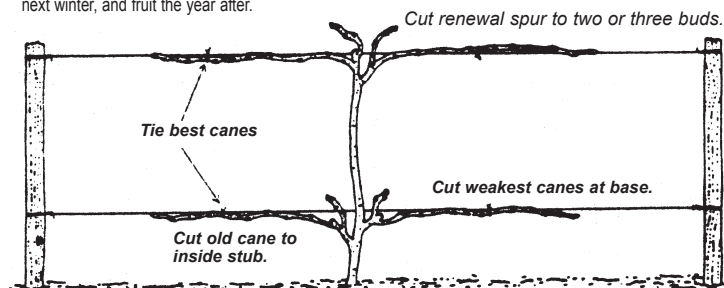
SECOND DORMANT SEASON: Cut away side shoots leaving only the trunk and two major branches. Tie these to the arbor top or the trellis wire.



SPUR TRAINING OF GRAPES: Third Dormant Season: Remove all shoots from the vertical trunk. Choose the strongest side shoots on horizontal branches and cut to two buds. Remove weak shoots at the base, spacing a spur cut to two buds every 6-10"



SPUR TRAINING OF GRAPES: Third Dormant Season: Remove shoots from the trunk. Cut horizontal branches back so that two long shoots remain on each. On a two-wire trellis, you can leave up to eight shoots per vine. Tie the shoots farthest from the trunk to the trellis. Cut the other to two or three buds. The tied shoot will fruit the following summer. The clipped shoot will produce growth to replace it the next winter, and fruit the year after.



ANNUALLY: Every dormant season after this, each spur will have two shoots that produced fruit during the summer. Cut off weak spurs. Cut the stronger spurs to two or three buds. These buds will produce fruit-bearing shoots in summer. Repeat each year. Always keep the trunk clear of growth.

ANNUALLY: When the outside cane has borne fruit, cut it back to the inside stub, now holding two or three new canes. Select the best and tie it to the trellis for fruit. Cut the next cane to two or three buds. Remove the weakest at the base. Repeat each year.

