

From:



Growing Grapes

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The fruit of the vine – the food of the “gods”

The “food of the gods”, grapes have held a place in history since about 8000 BCE when humans first learned how to grow them. When searching for information on growing grapes, you’re likely to find a plethora of information on the history of wine and wine making. The main reason for wine consumption in olden times was because wine was an easily produced replacement for poor drinking water. However, you don’t have to be a wine lover to love growing the fruit of the vine.

Grape vines are a beautiful ornamental and valuable as shade or screen plants around your home when trained on a trellis or arbor. Classified according to use, today grapes are grown for three reasons: eating (table grapes), winemaking, and as ornamental grapevines. Some table grapes are best eaten from the vine, some are best preserved in jellies or jams, some are dried into raisins, and some grape varieties, like the Concord grape, are multi-purpose.

The Concord grape, which gets its name from Concord, Massachusetts, is a marble sized fruit that fills your entire mouth with a burst of robust sweetness! Developed in 1849 by Ephraim Wales Bull, today more than 400,000 tons of Concord Grapes are produced each year. Although most are grown commercially, Concord Grapes are one of many grape cultivars also suitable for the home garden.



Grape choices are many. Grapes are green, red, purple, or black. Some have seeds; some do not. Some grape skins (slip-skin) separate easily from the fruit and some do not.

When choosing a grape cultivar, your best source of advice on growing grapes is a reputable nursery. Besides directing you to those that grow successfully in your area, a nursery will also help you choose a cultivar suitable for your intended use.

Although learning how to grow grapes can be a challenge, successfully growing grapes is a rewarding part of hobby gardening. If you are successful in learning how to grow grapes, your reward will be bountiful! A single grapevine will produce up to twenty pounds of grapes per year and your mature grape arbor will last up to forty years!

The Grape Growing Challenge(s)

One thing all grapes have in common is the way they grow. Grapes love full sun. Cultivars produce best if planted on the south slope of your garden. Grapevines are deciduous and as such are an excellent planting that provides both summer shade and lets winter sun shine through.

Planting grape cuttings is the easy part of growing grapes. Grapevines easily sprout from cuttings taken during their dormant period. Although grapes aren't fussy about climate or soil composition they are best planted in early spring after the frost leaves the ground and before buds begin to swell.

Grapevines usually need no fertilization and it's near impossible to plant a grapevine too deep. Planting grapes in pre-conditioned soil – thoroughly tilled, weeded, and composted – both provides grapevines with good drainage and gives them a rich organic bed. Dig a hole, get it good and wet, saturate the root ball of your grapevine and plant it.

If you plant vines sold in cardboard sleeves, there's no need to remove the container; it will soon rot in the soil. However, do leave the top of the sleeve just above the surface of the soil. Support grapevines with stakes or grow a trellised grape arbor. For instance, a garden pergola is a lovely support for your grapevines.

The challenge in growing grapes is threefold. First of all, grapes are a hardy perennial that bloom in the second year of growth from the old wood of the first year. So, the first year you grow grapes you must tend them patiently and train the vines (or try) to grow along the trellis or arbor you hope to confine them to in the future.

Confining grapes is the second challenge in learning how to grow grapes. Once established, grapevines like to ramble and can soon dominate your landscape if you don't take care to keep them in check.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of learning how to grow grapes is promoting pollination so the leafy vines will bear fruit. Blossoms are either male or female, and while a few cultivars will self-pollinate, most need the help of bees to get the job done.

Pruning & Picking Grapes

The most difficult part of growing grapes is the hefty amount of pruning required. When pruning, keep in mind that the current season's growth produces fruit from last season's wood. Too heavy pruning results in an abundance of foliage, but very little fruit. Too light pruning results in large yields of poor quality fruit.

Depending on your location, if you can, prune grapevines once during winter. However, this can be tricky because you should neither prune vines periods of severe frost nor after the sap begins to rise until after the leaves are fully developed. Basic pruning is simple. The coarser bark of old wood is easily recognizable. Follow the growing tip back to the older wood from the year before. Then, come forward leaving four to five buds and lop the vine with secateurs (small pruning shears).



Grapes grow new shoots from early spring blossoms. If left unattended, these shoots will transform your grapevine into an unproductive and unruly problem. Remove all weak, thin shoots and leave only the strongest shoot to develop. Flowers from this shoot precede the development of fruit.

Keep your vine tidy throughout the summer. Prune shoots back to the third or fourth leaf after fruiting. Remove any new growth. Also, remove all leaves from around growing fruit clusters to give them maximum sun.

Although there is no hard and fast rule about how much to prune, cutting more away leads to stronger and more robust growth during the next season. For instance, to keep a garden pergola shady, you may wish to allow more growth to remain.

Grapes change color long before they are ripe. To avoid picking clusters before they reach their peak, taste the grapes first. If they aren't ripe, wait for them to develop. Since grapes will not improve after harvest, this way you will avoid "sour grapes".

Grapes Container Gardening

Grapevines are well suited to **container gardening**, which, on the surface, looks like a **great fruit gardening idea**. However, there is one problem with grapes in container gardening.

Usually, grapes grown in containers are grown only for the beauty of their foliage and the enjoyment of watching them climb a trellis; they won't bear fruit. Although some varieties of grapes self-pollinate, blossoms need the help of wind or bees to produce fruit.

Still, a trellised grapevine can be a lovely focal point for your container garden. Whether planted or potted, growing a grapevine in full sun is probably the most important requirement for growing grapes.

Because it's very easy to propagate grapes from cuttings, if you have a grapevine in your garden, transplanting a cutting into a container won't cost you anything more than the pot! Low-maintenance plants, in addition to being easy-going about soil composition, planting depth, and fertilization container grown grapevines require only moderate watering.

To start a grapevine in a container, merely preserve a few pruned canes that are 12 to 18-inches long with three or four growth nodes intact. Make a 45 degree cut at the top of the cane for identification purposes and make a straight cut on the bottom of your transplant. Plant the canes, flat end down, keeping one growing node above the soil line. The others will take root and in three to six weeks, you will have the start of a beautiful new grape container garden!

Like garden grown grapes, container grapevines need to be pruned at the beginning of their second season of growth. However, unless you are seriously trying to produce fruit, container-grown grapevines only need pruning to keep them manageable and attractive.

About Gardening-Guides.com

HDK-BeheerBV company is the parent company of Gardening-Guides.com. Started in 2004, Gardening-Guides.com is the brainchild of webmaster Hans Dekker. It's his vision to offer you a panoramic view of gardening.



In addition to being the trailblazer for Gardening-Guides.com, Hans is also a talented Internet businessman and owner of Net Research, Netherlands. Starting with just a few articles on Holland bulbs and tulips, Hans has not only used his Internet expertise to grow a virtual garden that holds dozens of cultivars, but he has also cultivated a team of talented writers that provides you with ever-fresh news and insights into every type of gardening you can imagine.

The mission of gardening-guides.com is to provide you, the gardener with quality information about year-round gardening, garden related topics and the resources you need to find the plants, tools, and other gardening products you need to grow a successful and satisfying garden.

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