

Grape Information

Grapes have been grown for thousands of years, for many uses. Besides eating, juicing and wine making, the leaves can provide shade when grown on a trellis or arbor. One grape vine can produce enough new growth to arch over a walkway. Grape vines also have great fall color.

Soil

Grapes prefer a well-drained sandy loam soil. It should be kept moist the first year after planting, but the grapes will stand short dry periods in following years.

Planting

A southern exposure will produce the best grapes. Plant grapes any time during the year, as long as there is adequate water, pruning back the top growth to two or three buds. They should be planted no more than one inch deeper than the plants grew in the nursery. If the roots have grown excessively long prior to planting, prune them back to avoid wadding in the planting hole. Most grapes are self-fruitful, so they do not require pollination from other varieties.

Pruning

Pruning should be done in the dormant season, either winter or early spring. The type of pruning you will need to do depends on what your overall goal is. If the only purpose of the grape vine is to cover an arbor, then one strong vine can be trained over the arbor with limited pruning each year to thin out the entangled growth. If you are growing grape vines for fruit, then good pruning practices become more important. Since grapes are produced on stems from 1-year old wood, the purpose of pruning is to limit the amount of 1-year old wood a plant has so it will not over produce. By limiting the amount of fruit one plant produces, you can expect that the fruit it does produce to be of good quality. The following describes the cane and spur methods of pruning. Spur pruning is the easiest and most widely used method, although some grape varieties require the cane method.

First Growing Season

Set end posts and string wire across at desired height, 2.5' is typically used. Set smaller posts at each plant location. Plant vine and let it grow naturally. See figure A

First Dormant Season

Select the strongest stem and tie it to the post, this will be the trunk. Cut all other side shoots off. Cut the trunk down to the lowest 3 to 4 buds. See figure B

Second Growing Season

Choose the strongest new shoot to continue the trunk. Cut off all other shoots. When the trunk reaches the wire, cut it back to encourage side growth. Train the two strongest shoots along the wire on each side of the trunk. Tie each arm to the wire. Cut back all growth on the arms to 8"-10". See figure C

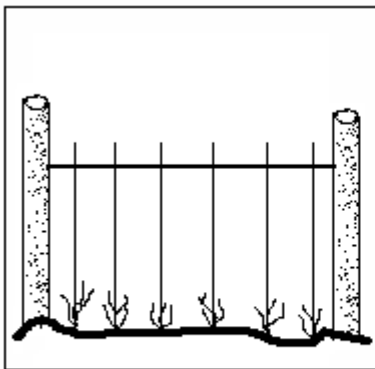


Figure A

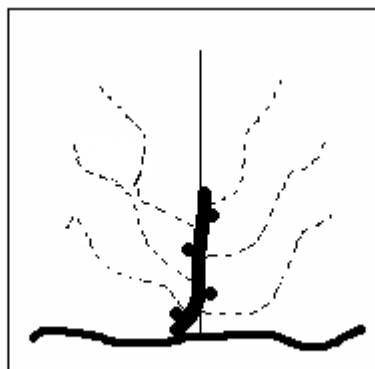


Figure B

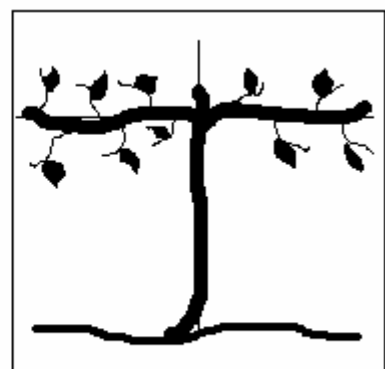


Figure C

Second Dormant Season

Cut back all growth at the base of the trunk and arms. Make sure the arms are still tied to the wire.

Third Growing Season

Let the vine grow, cutting off any growth on the trunk. Cane and spur differ from here on.

Spur Pruning

Third Dormant Season

Remove the weakest shoots growing on the arms leaving the strongest shoots spaced 6"-10" apart. Cut each remaining shoot back to two buds. These are now called spurs. See figure D

Annually

During the growing season, each spur will produce two fruit-bearing shoots. All growth should be removed from the trunk. During the dormant season, remove the weakest shoot on each spur and cut the remaining shoot to two buds. This is now the new spur.

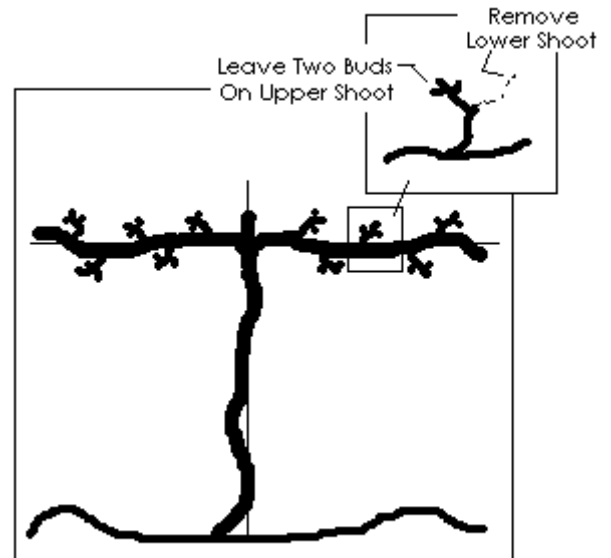


Figure D

Cane Pruning

Third Dormant Season

Select the two strongest shoots growing on the arm, and closest to the trunk, and cut them to two buds. These two shoots will be the renewal spurs. Cut back each arm to 10-12 buds, these buds will grow the vines that produce fruit the next summer. See figure E

Annually

During the dormant season, cut back each arm at its base leaving the renewal spurs and its growth. Select the two strongest shoots from the renewal spur and cut them back to 10-12 buds. Attach the shoots to the wire. These shoots will be the new arms. Select the next two strongest shoots from the renewal spur, as close to the trunk as possible, and cut them back to two buds each. These shoots will be the new renewal spurs. Cut back all other growth.

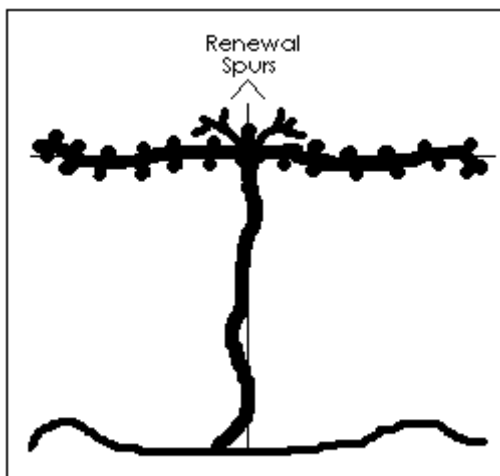


Figure E

Alternative Methods

Two -Wire Trellis System: Follow all of the steps above except, string a wire at 2.5' and 5' instead of just 2.5'.

Two Trunk Vine: Instead of only growing one shoot up as the trunk, grow two shoots.