



2004

J&L Garden Center

The All Season Gift
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620 North 500 West Bountiful, Utah 292-0421

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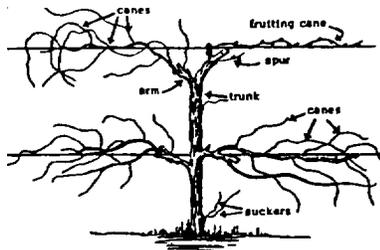
Pruning Grapes

Pruning is the most important part of raising grapes. Proper pruning will not only help the plants grow the way they should, but proper pruning will also help the vine produce a better crop of grapes. Unfortunately, most homeowners do not know how to prune grapes properly, and they tend to neglect their grape vines. Proper pruning usually means that you are removing 90% to 95% of all the new canes from last year. Fortunately grape vines are very forgiving: if you prune them wrong this year you may lose your fruit crop but you can prune them right the next year and harvest fruit again. You may only lose one year's fruit crop.



Timing

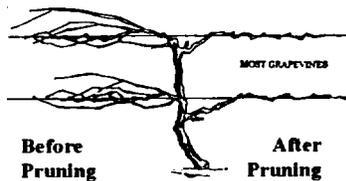
Prune your grape vines very early in the spring before the vines begin to grow. The best time to prune grapes is in late-January or February, depending on the weather. Early-March is sometimes a little too late to prune grapes. **It is better to prune grapes a little too early than a little too late.**



Pruning late, after the buds swell and the sap begins to flow, will make the plant "bleed" sap. This "Bleeding", although not desirable, will not hurt the plant enough to kill it. The plant will stop bleeding sap on its own within a few days to a week. Many people are very concerned when they see two or three gallons of sap drip from a grapevine but there is nothing you can do to stop the bleeding, you just have to wait.

Which Grapes Need Pruning?

All grape vines need to be pruned to control their size. Most grapes will also produce better quality grapes if they are pruned correctly. Grape vines will either produce a lot of clusters of small grapes, or they will produce a fewer number of clusters with large grapes: your choice. If you want the large grapes you must prune your vines quite severely each spring.



Many people growing juice grapes (concord, muscat, niagara, etc.) don't care how big the individual grapes are, they just want a big crop. These types of grape vines don't have to be pruned, except to train them and to control the size of the vines. However, the vines will produce

a better quality fruit if you do take the time to prune them.

People growing seedless table grapes (Himrod, Glennora, Suffolk, Canadice, etc.) usually want large grapes to eat. These varieties must be trimmed heavily each spring if they are to produce large grapes. Professional grape growers will also trim their grape vines during the summer, to keep them under control. The vineyardists know that they must prevent grape vines from producing too many leaves. Each cluster of grapes must have a certain number of leaves to attain its best flavor. Too many leaves, or not enough leaves, influence how sweet the grape will eventually taste.

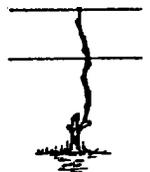


Seedless grapes do not grow *extra-large* naturally, even if they are pruned correctly. Professional grape growers spray the grape clusters several times during the summer with gibberellic acid, a plant hormone, to make the fruit grow larger. Thompson seedless grapes, for example, don't grow as big as you see them in the supermarkets by themselves. They have been sprayed with Gibberellic Acid. Gibberellic acid helps all seedless grapes produce larger fruit, but it has no effect on grapes with seeds.

Gibberellic acid is not a chemical. It is a natural growth regulator found in the growing tips of all plants. It can make plants grow faster, larger, and it can even stimulate plants to bloom differently, when applied in the correct dosage. Gibberellic acid is widely used in the plant industry; including grape production, african violet care, and in growing poinsettias.

First Year Pruning

There are many ways to prune grape vines. One method is called the **four-cane Kniffen System**. This method of pruning is not necessarily the best way to prune grapes, but it is a fairly easy way to prune them. If you are trying



to cover an arbor, a fenceline, or some other support system, you will want to prune them differently. The principles of pruning grapes are the same for all pruning systems; just the shape is different.

Prune all the side branches off the main cane when you plant it the first year. Let the main cane grow to the top of your support system and cut the top off. Do not let the main cane continue to grow; make the cane produce side branches.

Second Year Pruning

Select one or two side branches at each of four locations on the main cane. Count five to ten buds on each branch. Cut each of the selected side branches off at this point and remove all the remaining side branches at the main cane. You are not concerned about the plant producing fruit this year so don't worry about selecting any particular buds. It will actually help the vine if you remove any fruit that may form during the second year.



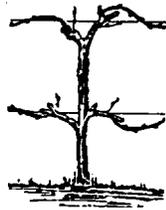
Third Year Pruning

Grape vines produce fruit on "this year's growth" coming from "last year's side branches". New growth coming from older branches does not produce fruit. However, this new growth is still beneficial to help the plant renew itself. You can choose some "Renewal spurs" from this type of growth.



You can see the difference in age by the color of the wood. Last year's growth is smooth and has a tan color. Older wood is brown and rough. Keep this color difference in mind as you start selecting branches to prune.

Select two of last year's side branches at each of the four points you have chosen on your main cane. Make sure these side branches are last year's growth by checking the color of the wood. Leave ten to fifteen buds on each of these canes and remove the rest of the cane at that point.



Before removing all of the rest of the branches growing from the main cane, select at least two **renewal spurs** at each of the four locations. A renewal spur should be a side branch that only has one or two buds. It should be as close to the main cane as possible. These renewal spurs can be any age of growth: new wood or old wood.

These renewal spurs provide new growth right next to the main cane. If you don't keep new growth right next to the main cane, the side branches will have to get longer

and longer each year in order to find new growth. Remember, you must always find 10 to 15 buds on the "new, tan canes".

After choosing 80 to 120 buds (total) and 4 to 8 renewal spurs (total), remove all the rest of the side branches and canes. As you can see, you are removing 95% of last year's growth. It is a hard job to do but you must remove the necessary canes.

Mature Plants

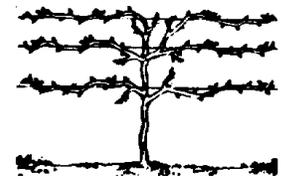
Prune mature plants just like three year old plants.

1. Choose 10 to 15 buds on each of eight side branches (two canes at each of the four locations on the main cane).

2. Make sure the buds you choose are on the new, tan wood; not on the older, brown wood. The buds you choose will probably be on the side branches growing from the renewal spurs you chose last year.

3. Choose renewal spurs as close to the main cane as possible. These buds can be on the two year old wood from previous years or they can be on new wood from last year; it doesn't matter.

4. Remove all the remaining canes, even those that produced fruit last year.



Fertilizer and Water

Grape vines do not need much fertilizer or water, especially if they are near a lawn or garden. In fact, don't give grapes any special water or fertilizer if they are near a lawn or garden. Grape vines have large root systems that will find plenty of fertilizer and water. Too much water and fertilizer helps the plants produce a lot of long canes (you will have to do more pruning), and makes the fruit less flavorful.

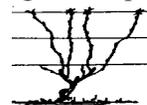
Try not to water grapes in the late-fall, while the grapes are ripening. Grapes taste better if they are a little dry during the final stages of maturing. Excessive moisture during the ripening stage can also make the grape skins split.



Alternative Pruning Methods

Grape vines can be pruned effectively in many different ways. You can prune them in a fan shape, curtain shape, umbrella shape, or cordon shape. The ultimate shape you prune your grape vines depends on the support system you have built for the grapes.

The important thing to remember is that you must leave 80 to 90 buds on last year's growth in order to have a good crop of grapes this year.



Fan



Umbrella



Curtain