

Growing Grapes

Home fruit gardeners can be successful if they select the right grape cultivars, maintain a good fertility and pest management program, and properly prune grapevines annually. Here's what you need to know:

•**Choosing a location:** Grapes can be grown almost anywhere soil is fertile and well-drained, and where plants receive sun most of the day. Good air flow is also beneficial.

•**To Plant:** Once a location is chosen, dig a hole twice as wide and the same depth as your root ball. Gently loosen the roots and place in the hole. Combine the existing soil with compost and topsoil and fill the hole so that settled soil will leave the plant at the same level at which it was in the pot. Shredded leaves & bark work well as mulch to prevent weed competition.

•**Trellis:** Before growth begins the second year, a support for the vines, either a trellis or an arbor, must be provided. Vines planted for training on a trellis are normally placed 8 feet apart, while those planted for training on an arbor can be placed 4 feet apart. Ease of picking fruit and pruning should be kept in mind when considering trellis options. Often the existing property may suggest a location adjacent to a porch or walkway.

•**Watering:** Water well. Grapes require approximately 1 inch of water per week through the first growing season. Water plants every 7 to 10 days during dry weather.

•**Fertilizing:** Grapes perform best where the soil pH is between 5.0 and 6.0. Apply lime only when soil analysis indicates a need. If necessary, apply a complete low analysis fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, in the spring. Keep fertilizer 6 to 12 inches from the trunk and spread evenly under the spread of the vine.

•**Pruning:** Pruning grape vines can be a mystery. But if you remember that all grapes produce fruit on one-year old wood, you have taken the first step towards viticulture! Grape vines must be pruned annually to encourage a high yield of good quality grapes. Pruning is best done in winter or early spring. No pruning is necessary the first year. During winter following the first year select the strongest stem, remove all other stems, and stake the remaining stem. This will become your trunk. Allow stems to grow from the trunk. In spring begin removing all but two of the very best side shoots. During mid-summer of the 2nd year cut back the trunk when it reaches the desired height. Remove any new side branches that don't fit your plan. Cut back all but the desired side branches and the main trunk during the 2nd winter. What you have now is the basic frame for the plant - an upright stem with two sets of side branches

Edible Landscaping

Edible landscaping, simply put, replaces plants that are strictly ornamental with plants that produce food, allowing you to create a multi-functional landscape providing returns (fruits, berries, etc.) on your investment of water, fertilizer, and time. And let's face it, adding a plant to the landscape that only offers one season of interest or one function in the garden is a luxury on today's smaller home lots. Not only do grapes provide you with food and drink, but grapevines can be ornamental and valuable in your outdoor living spaces as shade or screen plants when trained on a trellis or arbor. Here are some additional benefits:

- **Improved Taste and Nutrition:** Nutrients and flavor in most plants are highest immediately after harvest. What could be better for you than fresh-off-the-vine grapes?
- **Increased Food Security:** An edible landscape reduces your dependence on foreign food sources which have unknown production systems
- **Reduced Food Costs:** Certain foods are more economical to grow at home than to purchase. In addition, not all of the varieties of grapes that we offer are readily available in local grocery stores.
- **Convenience:** Having fruits right outside the door will encourage you to add fresher, healthier foods to your diet—a terrific inducement for your children to enjoy them.
- **Fun and Exercise:** Growing your own crops is rewarding and fun! The exercise you get in the process can help you stay fit.
- **Sustainability:** Consuming locally grown produce can be an important part of reducing energy inputs and protecting our environment.



Grapes

Virginia Berry Farm

www.virginiaberryfarm.com

Seedless Table Grapes

All of our seedless grapes are hardy, disease resistant and self-pollinating. They are excellent for juice, jelly or as a distinctively flavored table grape.

Our Table Grape offerings:

• **Concord Seedless** is a sport of Concord, which comprises the majority of all grape plantings due to its reliability under widely varying conditions. This mid-season variety has a long ripening time. The clusters of **blue** berries have excellent flavor.

• **Himrod** is an early season variety. It produces large, loosely filled bunches of medium-sized, **white** grapes with a honey-like flavor and melting, juicy texture. The grapes may be dried as raisins.

• **Muscadines** are southern native grape varieties. Unlike our other table grapes they do have seeds, but the taste is somewhat legendary among aficionados and they are easy to grow without the use of chemicals. We offer three varieties:

Carlos yields huge, delicious, **golden-bronze** grapes often more than an inch in diameter. This grape is a favorite for juice and jelly.

Cowart is vigorous, productive and disease resistant. The large **black** fruit is used in jams and jellies.

Magnolia is mid-season variety that yields small, flavorful, **bronze** berries that are excellent for wine, juice or fresh eating.

• **Reliance** is the most cold hardy of the seedless varieties. This early season grape produces large clusters of medium-sized **red** berries with tender skins and a sweet flavor. Ripens two weeks before Concord Seedless.

• **Vanessa** is a medium-sized, **red** dessert grape with a mild, fruity flavor and a firm to crisp texture. The vine is moderately vigorous and one of the hardiest.

• **Venus** is a vigorous, productive vine that bears early ripening, medium clusters of large **blue-black** grapes with a great flavor.

Wine Grapes

We have expanded our inventory of wine grapes to offer a more extensive selection for the vinophile hobbyist.

Our Wine Grape offerings:

• **Cayuga White** was developed from crosses of the hybrids Schuyler and Seyval Blanc done at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station. Cayuga is a versatile, fast-growing grape that can produce fruit in just two years. It can be made into a semisweet wine with a fruity aroma, or oak aged into a dry, less fruity wine. This is a productive and disease-resistant variety.

• **Chambourcin** is a late-ripening grape that requires a long growing season. It produces large moderately loose bunches of medium-sized blue berries. Little is known about the exact parentage of Chambourcin. It was a hybrid developed by Joannes Seibel in the Loire Valley of France, based on a number of undetermined Native American species and Seibel hybrids. It was released in the early 1960s.

• **Chardonnay** is thought by many people to be the premier white wine grape. It produces the great white Burgundy wines including Chablis, Pouilly-Fuiss, and Montrachet, and Chardonnay vines are widely grown around the world. It is an early ripening variety and one of the hardiest wine grapes.

• **Marechal Foch** is a wine grape that is gaining a huge, almost cult following. It is named after the World War I French General, Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch, and was developed in Alsace, France. It is classified as a Teinturier, meaning that this dark skinned grape has red rather than the white pulp found in most grapes. It is very early ripening, yielding small black grapes that produce a fruity, light red table wine.

• **Merlot** The Merlot grape can be traced back to France in the first century. It produces large yields of medium-sized, deep black fruit.

• **Pinot Noir** is one of the oldest grape varieties to be cultivated for the purpose of making wine. Ancient Romans knew this grape as Helvenacia Minor and vinified it as early as the first century AD. It has small, dark blue grapes that produce a dry, delicate, pinkish-red wine.

Anti-oxidants and Health

As a healthful snack nothing could beat the convenience or delicious flavor of grapes. And what could be more pleasant than enjoying a glass of wine with friends. But that's not all you get when you munch a bunch of grapes or sip that evening glass of wine.

Not only are grapes a good source of vitamins A, C, and B6, and minerals like potassium, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, as well as trace amounts of copper, manganese and zinc, they also contain beneficial compounds called flavonoids, very powerful antioxidants. Antioxidants are known to help neutralize harmful byproducts of metabolism called free radicals that are believed to be the threat that initiates disease problems. Antioxidants are believed to be important in preventing cancer, stroke, heart disease, and loss of memory resulting from Alzheimer's disease.



These flavonoids include a compound called resveratrol. A study published in the 2004 year-end edition of the [American Journal of Physiology](#) indicates that resveratrol inhibits formation of a protein that produces a condition called cardio fibrosis, a condition which reduces the heart's pumping efficiency when it is needed most, at times of stress. Recent studies have suggested the use of resveratrol as a cancer-preventive agent in prostate, lung, liver and breast cancer. In addition to resveratrol, grapes contain a compound called pterostilbene, a powerful antioxidant that is already known to fight cancer and may also help lower cholesterol.

Who knew something so good could be so good for you? So cheers! Here's to your health!