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Passionate for Pets, Plants & People

# Grapes

**Botanical name:** *Vitis*

**Plant type:** [Fruit](#)

**USDA Hardiness Zones:** [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#)

**Sun exposure:** [Full Sun](#)

**Soil type:** [Any](#)

**Soil pH:** [Slightly Acidic to Neutral](#)

Grapes, a long season crop, are often ignored in home gardens, and yet are one of the most widely produced fruits in the world. Grapevines not only produce sweet and versatile fruits, they add an element of drama to a garden or landscape. They are vigorous growers, and with the proper pruning, they will produce fruit with ease and can last longer than 30 years.

There are three different types of grapes: American (*V. labrusca*), European (*V. vinifera*), and North American native Muscadine (*V. rotundifolia*). American grapes are the most cold-hardy, while European grapes, usually more for wine than the table, do well in warm, dry, Mediterranean type zones. Hybrids are available. Thick skinned Muscadines thrive in the South.

## Planting

- Construct a trellis or arbor before planting. Grape vines will need to be trained to some sort of support to grow upward. This will also cut the risk of disease.
- Most grape varieties are self fertile. To be sure, ask when you are buying vines if you will need more than one plant to for pollination.
- Plant grapes where there is good air circulation.
- If you don't have a spot with full sun, make sure it at least gets morning sun. A small amount of afternoon shade won't hurt.
- Dig a hole large enough to give the new vine at least 1 1/2 feet of loose soil in all directions for the roots to expand.
- In the spring, place vines 8 feet apart in 12 inch deep holes. Space rows 10-12 feet apart.
- Water at time of planting.

## Care

- In the first couple of years, the vine should not be allowed to produce fruit. It needs to strengthen its root system before it can support the extra weight of fruit.
- Pruning is important. Not only would vines run rampant without control, but canes will only produce fruit once. Prune when vines are dormant, in March or April. This is before the buds start to swell, but when winter damage is apparent.
- Don't be afraid to remove at least 90 percent of the previous season's growth. This will ensure a higher quality product. Remember, the more you prune, the more grapes you will have.
- In the first year, cut back all buds except for 2 or 3. Then, select a couple of strong canes and cut back the rest. Make sure the remaining canes are fastened to the support.

- In the second year, prune back all canes. Leave a couple of buds on each of the arms. Remove flower clusters as they form.
- Fertilize lightly in the second year of growth, or more if you have problem soil.
- Use mulch to keep an even amount of moisture around the vines.
- A mesh net is useful in keeping birds away from budding fruit.

## Harvest/Storage

- If grapes aren't ripening, pinch back some of the foliage to let in more sunlight.
- Grapes will not continue ripening once picked from the vine. Test a few to see if they are to your liking before harvesting, usually in late summer-early fall.
- Grapes can be stored for up to six weeks in the cellar, but grapes can absorb the odors of other fruits and vegetables, so keep them separate. Use cardboard boxes or crates lined with clean, dry straw. Separate bunches with straw or sawdust. Check often for spoilage.