



Growing Grapes in a Home Garden

The grapevine is one of the oldest cultivated plants in the world. Grapes can be eaten fresh (table grapes) or processed into jam, jelly, juice, or wine. Basic requirements include a good planting site, hardy varieties (cultivars), and proper culture.

Growth and Fruiting Characteristics

The trunk is the permanent stem of the plant that supports the fruit-bearing canes. The trunk transports water and nutrients from the roots to the shoots. It also transports food manufactured by the foliage to the root system.

Shoots develop from dormant buds on the previous year's growth. As the shoots elongate, new buds form in the axils of the leaves. Initially the shoots are succulent, but they gradually harden and become woody by winter. The woody shoots are then called canes. Only one-year-old growth bears flowers and fruit clusters.

Site Selection and Planting

Grapevines grow on a wide range of soil types. Well-drained soils produce the best growth and yields. Avoid soils that are persistently wet during the growing season. Highly fertile soils are not essential. Grapevines tolerate a wide pH range.

Because of space restrictions, planting sites are often limited in the home garden. Select a site that receives at least 6 hours of direct sun each day. Avoid sites shaded by trees and shrubs.

Plant grapevines 6 to 8 feet apart within the row. Plant vigorous cultivars, such as Concord, 8 feet apart. Less vigorous cultivars may be planted 6 feet apart.

If a trellis is not used during the first growing season, set a 5- to 6-foot stake into the soil near each vine and train the new growth to it. Tie the shoots loosely to the stake to avoid girdling the stems. Support the new growth until it reaches the 6-foot wire on the grape trellis.

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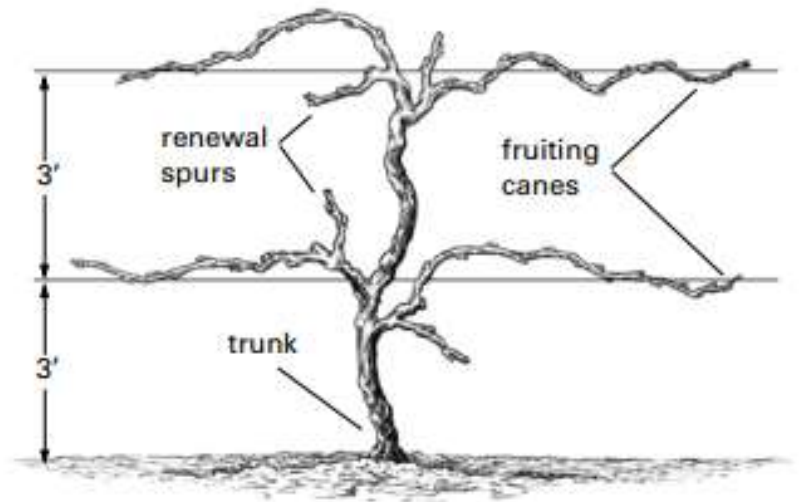
Pruning

Grapevines must be pruned annually to obtain maximum yields of high quality grapes and allow adequate vegetative growth for the following year. Grapevines produce fruit on the previous season's growth. Two-year and older wood is not fruitful.

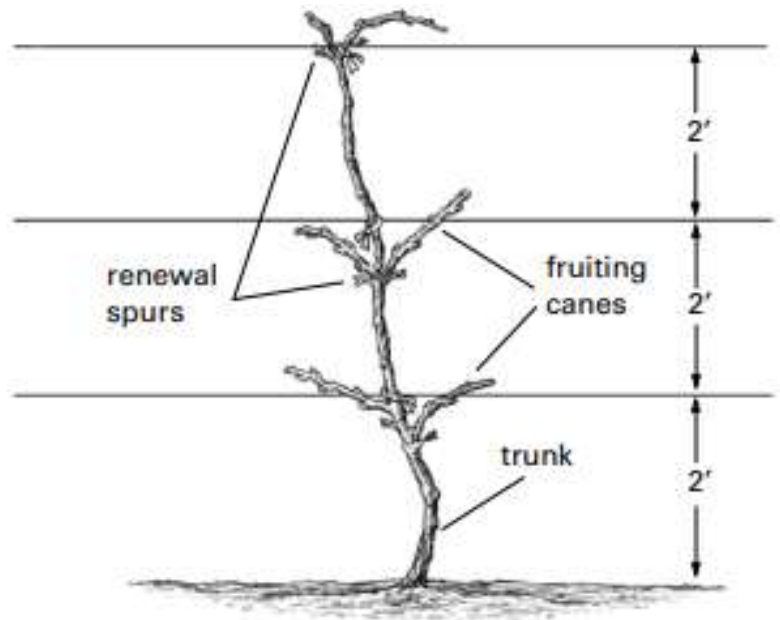
80-90% of the previous years growth will be cut back to 3-5 buds on remaining spurs.

Prune in late winter to early spring while plant is still dormant.

The four-cane Kniffin is popular because of its simplicity. This system consists of four canes, two on each side of the trunk, trained onto two trellis wires. In addition, four very short one- or two-bud canes (termed renewal spurs) are present. The renewal spurs produce canes in the desired direction for the following year.



The six-cane Kniffin system is similar to the four-cane Kniffin system, but has six canes trained to three trellis wires instead of four canes to two wires. Six one- or two-bud renewal spurs are also present. The six-cane Kniffin system is best for less vigorous cultivars.



In the single curtain system, the trunk of the grapevine is attached to a wire 6 feet above the ground. Two horizontal cordons (essentially lateral extensions of the trunk) grow along the wire and extend approximately 4 feet in each direction. Five-bud canes on the cordons produce the fruit crop. Single-bud renewal spurs on the cordons provide canes for training in the following year.

