

Planting Grapevines

Grapevines are self pollinating, so, you don't need different varieties or actually more than one plant to produce fruit. Grapevines like well drained soil that is slightly acidic (6.0-6.5), but will grow in soil ranging from 5.5 to 7.5 as well. Choose areas that are located in full sun. Any shading may prevent the vines from producing to their capability.

Soak the roots in water for about 1 to 2 hours just before planting. Dig holes that are slightly bigger than the root system. Hold plant to where the root collar is just above the ground level and fill the hole with soil. Lightly press the soil down around the hole. Water to eliminate air pockets and moisten the ground. Fill any gaps that settled and create a basin around the base of each plant.

Grapevines should be watered weekly (if no regular rainfall) for the first growing season and afterwards only weekly during dry periods.

Space the plants about 4 to 8 feet apart with rows about 8 to 10 feet apart.

After planting, cut the strongest cane back to 3 (at least 2) buds and completely remove other canes. If a trellis is not used during the first year, stake the plant and loosely attach the shoots as they grow.

Grapes produce flowers and fruit on the previous season's growth and require **annual pruning**. Two year old and older wood will not produce grapes. Before pruning, a vine could have up to 300 buds that could produce fruit. If not pruned back, the vine will produce too many clusters and will be unable to ripen them. The best time to prune grapevines will be in late winter to early spring. Mid February to late March are good for most regions.

Because the **root system** of the grapevine will remain in the upper 2-4 feet of the ground, grass and weeds will always compete with the plant for moisture and nutrients. Caution should be used to not disturb or damage the shallow growing roots. Mulch should be applied regularly to keep the weed and grass population down.

Grapevines are sensitive and products such as 2,4-D, dicamba and many broadleaf herbicides can cause damage. Even if a neighbor uses such products, it can cause damage to surrounding areas.

Fertilize grapevines when they exhibit weak growth or poor leaf color. Over fertilizing can damage the plant rather than help it. By the third year after planting, the plants could be safely fertilized with one cup of 13-13-13 or about one bushel of aged manure to the soil. Neither method should be close enough to the base of the plant. Otherwise the plant will be burned. Do not fertilize after late spring. Otherwise, the fertilizing will encourage late season growth which can become susceptible to fall and winter damage.

Trellis your vines by the second year. Here is a link to a page with the University of Missouri Extension site with drawings on constructions of different trellises.

<http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/agguides/hort/g06090.htm>