




Grape (*Vitis* spp.)

Type	Deciduous/ Evergreen	Height x Width (metres)	Spacing (metres)	Pollinator	Soil type	Sun	Moisture	Shelter	Plant	Harvest
Vine	D	1-3 x 2-5	1.5-3	N				Y	Winter	Autumn

Site

- Must be in full sun. Needs a hot summer, and also winter chill.
- Shelter from wind and heavy spring frosts.
- Needs good air circulation to avoid diseases.
- Needs good drainage for its deep roots – prefers fertile, dry, stony soils.
- Good grown over a pergola, verandah or trellis to provide summer shade, or on wires (2m high, wires 30cm apart).

Care

- Self-fertile.
- Plant in winter.
- Mulch in spring to control weeds and retain moisture.
- Feed with a liquid organic fertiliser high in potash while fruit is ripening.
- Protect from birds when the fruit is nearly ripe – use nets, or tie a paper bag over each bunch.

Training & pruning

- Training and pruning are essential for getting a good crop.
- Place a strong stake in the position you want for the main trunk, reaching either to the top of the wires or the top of the pergola/patio.
- At planting, select the strongest shoot as the main stem, shorten it back to 60cm, and tie it to the stake. Remove all other shoots.
- In spring, select the strongest of the new shoots to be the permanent trunk and tie it to the stake loosely. Remove all the other shoots.

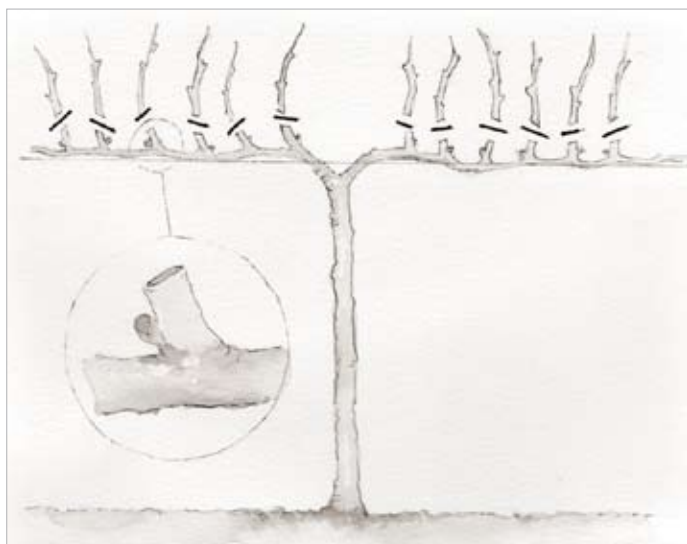
Growing on wires

Spring/summer training:

- When this main stem has grown past the top of the wire, cut it back to the level of the wire.
- When the top two buds sprout a new shoot each, train them as 'arms', one to the right and one to the left along the wire, and tie them loosely. Remove all fruit until the vine is established.

Winter training:

- Cut off all side shoots (laterals) growing from these main 'arms', leaving just a stub (see the diagram).



Training a grape vine on wires – in winter, cut all the laterals back to a stub



Growing over a pergola or patio

Spring/summer training:

- When the main stem reaches the top of the support stake, bend it over the top of the first beam and tie it down. Pinch off any side shoots, so all the plant's energy goes into lengthening the main stem until it has covered the structure.

Winter training:

- Cut off any side shoots (laterals) that have developed, leaving just a stub.

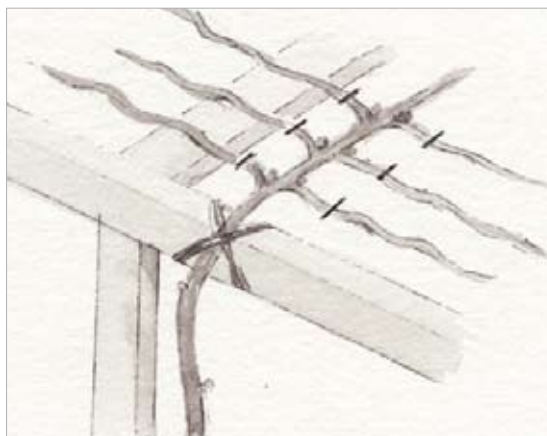
Next spring:

- When the new shoots reach about 15cm, thin them to 30cm apart and as they get longer, loosely tie them down onto wires, to the right and to the left of the main stem.

Once established on the structure

- Fruit forms on lateral growth off 1-year-old stems.
- Prune each winter, well before the sap rises in spring. Space out the laterals to 20cm apart and stub each lateral back to two buds (see the diagram below).
- Remove all weak, diseased, damaged or worn-out growth.
- After the new growth has sprouted in spring, choose one fruiting lateral per spur, and rub off the rest.
- To have good-quality fruit each year, it's important to control the amount of fruit.

Training over a pergola or patio – in winter, stub each lateral back to two buds



Once the bunches have formed, allow two or three bunches per lateral, and cut off the end of each lateral two leaves beyond the last bunch. Shorten any sub-laterals to one leaf, or rub them off.

- Trim the laterals again during summer to let in enough sun to ripen the grapes.

Companions

- Tansy, mustard, sage, hyssop.

Harvest

- Fruits within 2–4 years.
- Pick in dry weather when fully ripe, cutting the bunch with scissors and keeping a small length of stem.
- Eat fresh, make into juice, or freeze for desserts.

Health

- High levels of antioxidants and vitamins C and K. Also good levels of vitamins A, B1, B2 and potassium.

Recommended varieties

Early: Himrod (seedless green), Buffalo (red), Shuyler (black)

Mid: Iona (pink), Steuben & Albany Surprise (red)

Late: Niagara (green)

Plants for free

Hardwood cuttings

- In winter, cut sections of stem that are as thick as a pencil and include three buds.
- Insert them into a pot of sandy potting compost, leaving the top bud uncovered.
- Leaves and roots will form during the summer. Plant into pots and keep in a sheltered place until it's time to plant them out.

