

GRAPE PRUNING: CANE OR SPUR?

After the initial training and structure of the vine has been established it is time to start pruning for fruit production. Pruning from this point onward depends on the type of grape you're growing, whether it is cane or cordon pruned. Training the first year will give you the basic structure that all fruit production pruning starts from. Please see our handout *Grape Pruning & Training*. Pruning for fruit production begins the 2nd winter. Some grape varieties bear well using either system; consult literature or our Information Desk to learn which method works best for your variety.

Some grape varieties need longer lengths of one year old wood to produce fruit well. For these grape varieties only the trunk is permanent. While the "arm" is producing fruit care must be taken to ensure that new canes are also grown each year to serve as replacement arms (which will produce next year's grapes!). Because the entire cane is removed after fruiting, grapes which bear best using this method of pruning are referred to as CANE PRUNED varieties.

Cane Pruning- Second Winter

Remove any side branches from trunk and prune each arm back to two buds. The finished vine will look like Figure 1.

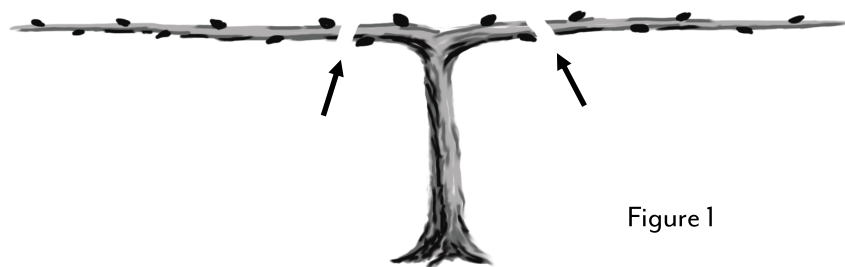


Figure 1

Cane Pruning Third and Subsequent Winters:

Each of the four buds (2 from each arm) will elongate throughout the season. During the third winter select the sturdiest on each side to be next year's fruiting-arm. Attach these vines to your wire and cut them back to 12 buds. Cut the other vine on each side back to two buds as in Figure 2. These will serve as next year's replacement canes. Each arm of the vine will produce a fruiting vine from each of the buds along its length.

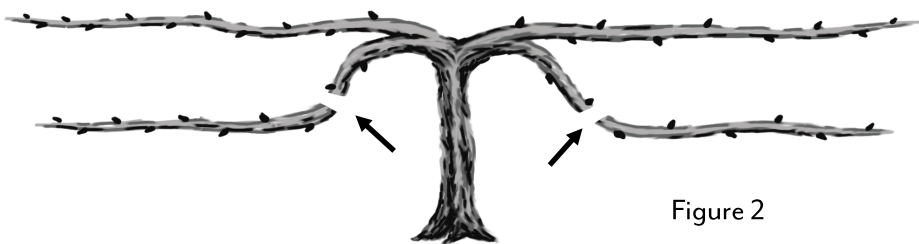


Figure 2

When the next winter arrives, the fruiting cane is cut off entirely and the longest replacement vine becomes next year's fruiting cane, the other is pruned back to two buds, as in Figure 3. This pruning is repeated annually.

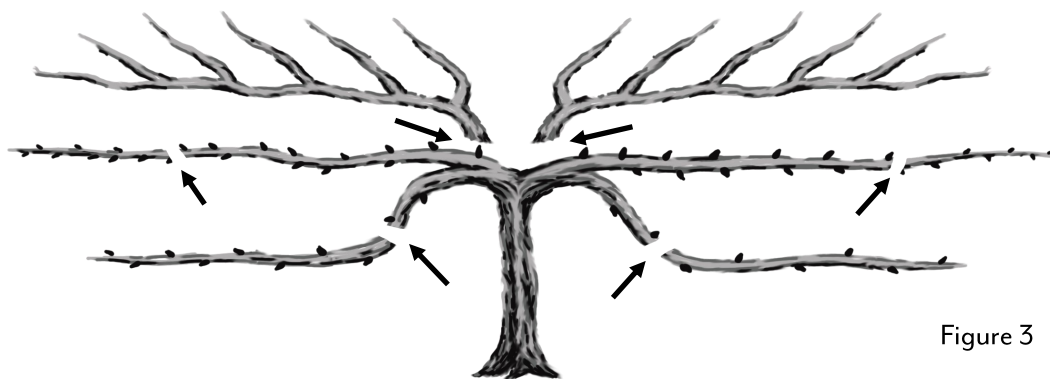


Figure 3

Thinning: Grapes will typically produce 1 to 3 clusters of fruit from each bud of the fruiting cane. For better size and quality, keep only one cluster per bud (usually the first) and remove all others.

Because the arms remain from year to year, they become thick and woody. These enlarged arms are often referred to as "cordons". Semi-permanent side branches are also established every 6-10" along the arms. These prominent structures which bear and are pruned back repeatedly are known as "fruiting-spurs" or simply "spurs". Grapes which bear good crops using this style of pruning are known as SPUR or CORDON PRUNED varieties.

Spur (Cordon) Pruning-

Second Winter:

Remove any side branches on the arms and trunk, and shorten each arm to 12 buds. The finished vine should look like Figure 4.

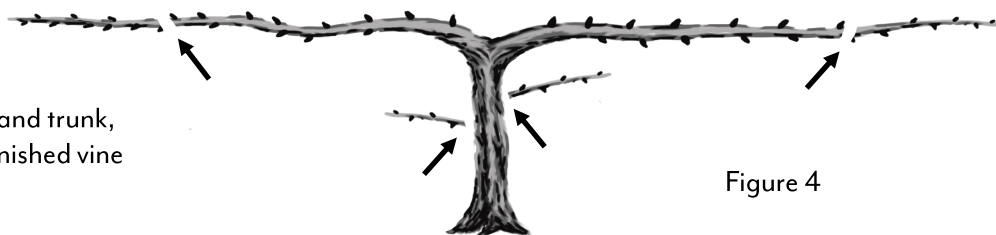


Figure 4



Figure 5

Spur/Cordon Pruning Third Winter:

Objective: Establishing the mature form of the vine, increasing the plant's sturdiness and pruning for the next year's fruit.

Each of the buds located on each arm will produce a side-branch. Most pruning methods train all the side-branches (and the permanent spurs they will produce) in the same direction--up onto wires (as in Figure 5), or down, either on wires or hanging with gravity.

Remove any flowers/fruit as it forms. At the end of the season thin side-branches so they are spaced 6-10" apart (4-6" for wine grapes) and cut each side branch back to 2 buds as in Figure 6. The permanent structure of the vine is now complete.

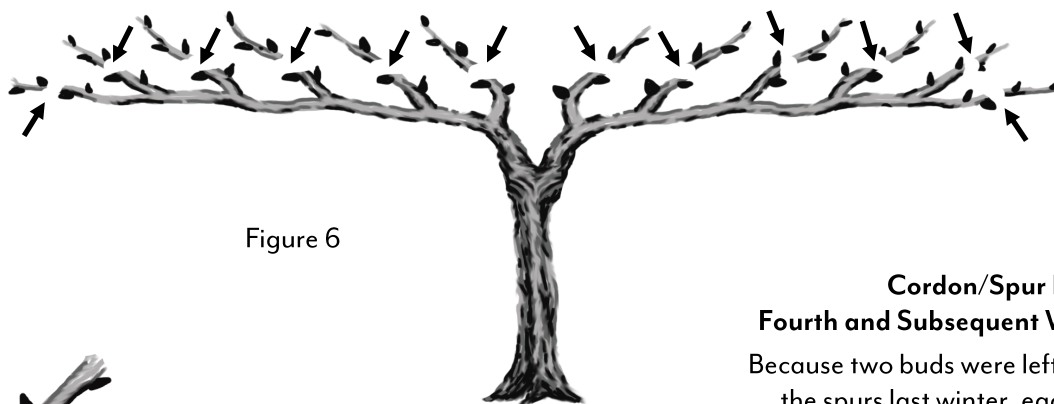


Figure 6

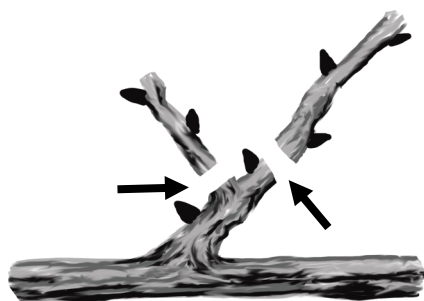


Figure 7

Cordon/Spur Pruning Fourth and Subsequent Winters:

Because two buds were left to form the spurs last winter, each of the fruiting vines develops in pairs emerging from each spur. Typically, the cane which is further from the trunk is removed entirely and the other is cut back to 2 buds. *If one vine is weak, remove it and cut the other back to 2 buds regardless of position.* This process is repeated every winter. Each spur would look like Figure 7 after pruning.



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