

GRAPE TRAINING AND CARE

Grapes are tough, self-fertile plants that need full sun for good fruit production. They are not particular about soil type as long as drainage is adequate, though they produce better quality fruit in soils of average to slightly poor fertility.

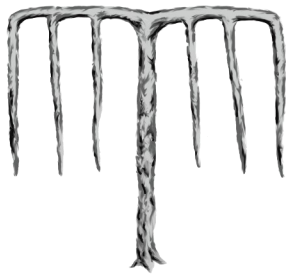
Site Selection and Layout:

Many homeowners will have to work around existing landscape elements. Try to select a sunny spot with adequate room. Table grapes require 8-15 linear feet depending on the training system; wine grapes require 4-8 feet. Good air circulation will help grapes resist common infections such as powdery mildew and botrytis.

If your soil is nitrogen deficient, apply a slow-release fertilizer at a rate of 2 oz. actual nitrogen per 100 sq. ft. Potassium and magnesium may also be applied annually in similarly light doses. Strongly acidic soils (below pH 6) may benefit from an occasional application of lime. Finally, grapes are famously sensitive to the herbicide 2,4-D, a widely used broad-leaf weed killer: Do not use such products in the vicinity of grapes.

Training Systems:

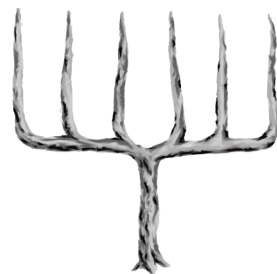
Grapes bear fruit on one-year-old wood. Training grapes helps the grower keep a good balance of fruiting wood from year to year. Training increases light penetration and air circulation, maximizes use of space, and increases efficiency of tasks (such as applying bird netting and harvesting). Common training patterns include:



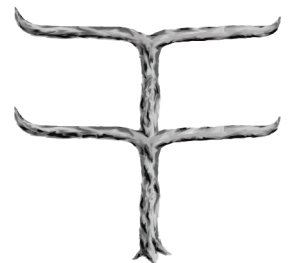
The Curtain



The Fan



The Guyot



The Kniffen

Initial Planting/Year One: Objective- Creating a strong root system.

Plant your grape in the soil at the same level it was growing at in the pot. **DO NOT REMOVE ANY ROOTS WHEN PLANTING!** This can stunt the plant. Immediately after planting, cut the top back to 3 or 4 strong buds (Fig. 1).

Do not attempt to train the vine this year, let it sprawl and create as many leaves as possible (Fig. 2). Leaves create energy which will produce a vigorous root system--the foundation for future success. **IF THE GRAPE PRODUCES ANY FLOWERS, REMOVE THEM PROMPTLY.** Reproduction takes great energy, and plants which bear fruit prematurely can see decreased production for many years. In the late winter, prior to bud-break, select one fairly straight, vigorous cane. Prune off all other canes and then shorten the remaining cane to 3 or 4 strong buds and attach it to a stake (Fig. 3).

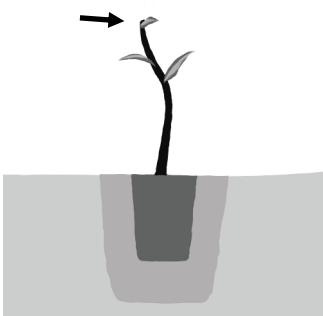


Figure 1: Grape at Planting

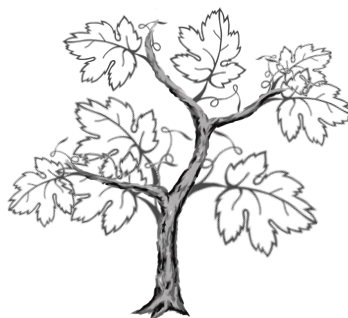


Figure 2: End of First Summer

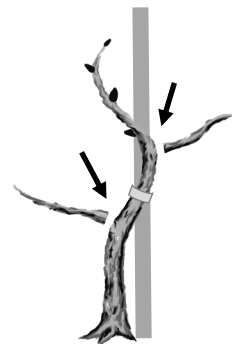


Figure 3: First Winter's Pruning

Year Two: Objective- Creation of the “trunk” and the “arms”.

Note: For simplicity, diagrams show a simple two-armed structure attached to a stake-and-wire trellis; modify as needed.

When spring growth has become sturdy enough (8-12" long), attach the most vigorous of the new sprouts to the stake with horticultural tape; cut off the remaining vines (Fig 4-5).

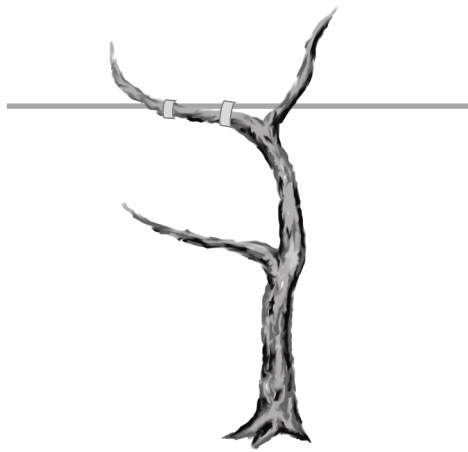


Figure 4: Tie to Wire

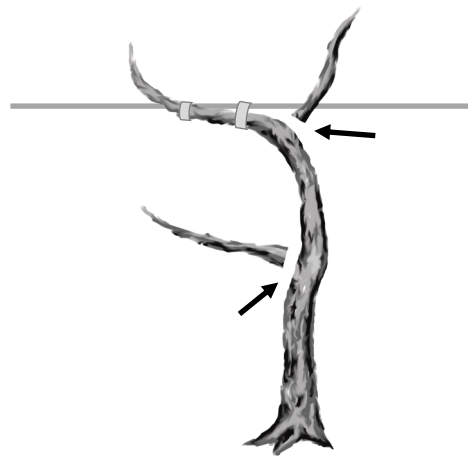


Figure 5: Prune

For single-level training continue attaching the developing trunk to the stake until it is 6" past the wire where you want your side-arms to form; pinch the tip off. If, like the kniffen, your training system requires additional horizontal arms, let your trunk grow 12" beyond the lower wire, and leave 2 buds above this wire when you tip-pinch; the stronger of these buds will form the remaining upright portion of your trunk. Attach the newly emerging side-canes to the wire when they are about 12". Remove any sprouts which appear on the trunk periodically. At the end of the second summer your grape will resemble Figure 6:

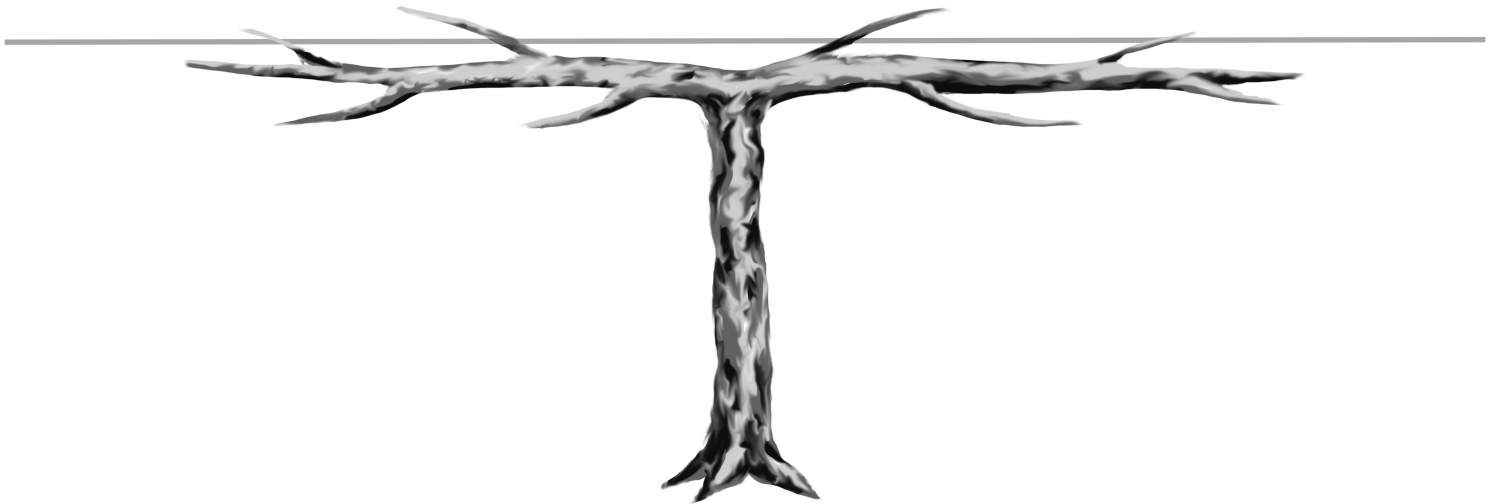


Figure 6: End of Second Summer

This is the point when you decide what kind of pruning your grape needs to produce the best fruit crop. Please see our handout on Cane and Spur Pruning for more details.



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