



Grape Culture Tips

Grapes are an excellent fruit for fresh use or processing into jam, pie or wine. Once established, well-tended grapevines can be productive for 40 years or more. Successful production of grapes in Indiana depends on matching adapted cultivars with good sites and following good cultural practices.

Site Selection: Grapes like full sun, mild winter temperatures, good soil drainage, and freedom from frost (avoid low areas where frost accumulates in the early spring). Cultivars differ significantly in their ability to withstand cold and disease, so some are better suited for production in certain parts of the state than others.

Soils: Proper soil drainage cannot be overemphasized. Soils that are consistently wet during the growing season should be avoided. Soil pH should be between 5.5 to 6.5.

Planting: Grapevines should be planted in early spring after the date of the last hard freeze has passed. Vines planted to be trained on a trellis are placed 8 feet apart while vines planted on an arbor can be placed 4 feet apart. Plant slightly deeper than the soil level of the pot. Apply ½ cup of 12-12-12 fertilizer around the plant, staying about one foot away from the trunk of the plant. In subsequent years, apply one pound of 12-12-12 around each plant in early spring before growth emerges.

Training and Trellising: Three years are normally required to establish a grape plant. It is important to properly train vines during the first few years of growth. Grapevines require some kind of support for ease of management. This can vary from a simple wire trellis to an elaborate arbor. All training systems require a strong trellis assembly to support the weight of fruit and vines. Grapevines are trained onto the trellis in a variety of ways. The most efficient methods provide well spaced, even distribution of fruiting wood along the trellis and promote full sun exposure for clusters and basal nodes. See extension bulletins listed below for details.

Pest Management: Grapes certainly have their share of pests. Selecting disease tolerant cultivars, maintaining good sanitation practices, managing vine canopies for good air movement, scouting for pests, and employing an effective spray program are all part of a successful pest management program. Most grape diseases are caused by fungi which thrive in hot, humid conditions. The most common diseases are Black rot, Downy mildew, and Powdery mildew. For effective and responsible disease control, growers should scout their plantings carefully and seek help in identifying problems. In contrast, there are relatively few insect pests of grapes. One of the most common is the Japanese Beetle. The adult insects emerge each year in June and July and feed on grape foliage. The damage can be severe if uncontrolled, especially on weak or young plants. *Of particular note: injury from 2,4-D herbicide is frequently confused with disease or insect injury. Most cultivated grapes are highly susceptible to injury by this herbicide and its related compounds. Extreme care should be taken when spraying weeds in your yard because the drift from these herbicides can destroy your vineyard.*

Information from Purdue Extension bulletin H0-45 and Ohio State Fact Sheet HYG-1423-98
For more information: www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/conhort.html & <http://plantfacts.osu.edu>