



Grapes for the Northwest

Grapes are deciduous vines that can put out enough growth in one year to arch over a walkway, roof an arbor, form a leafy wall, or put an umbrella of shade over a deck or terrace. For quality fruit you must choose a variety that will ripen in our cool summers. All of the edible and wine grape varieties carried by Sky are proven Northwest performers. Earlier-ripening varieties will perform better in cool summers or cooler microclimates. However, all grapes require heat and sun to set and ripen fruit. If you plant a grape in partial shade, you should consider it as an ornamental foliage plant providing summer shade or screening.

Grapes are deep-rooted plants, that like deep, loose soil, although you can grow them in shallower or clay soils. They need good drainage to prevent root damage. Amend clay soils with plenty of organic matter. Grapes do well on a southern or western slope with good air circulation and drainage. Protect from wind. Planting them against a south or west wall will give them extra heat and light.

Plant vines with the lowest bud on the plant just above the soil surface. Space six feet apart. Water weekly the first season. Thereafter, give them a deep watering once every two weeks during the hot, dry part of the summer. The vines can withstand minor drought once established, but for good fruit production they need to have moisture available at all times. Withhold water from mid-September on (if possible) to encourage the fruit to ripen.

A spring application of a balanced fertilizer blend (such as 5-5-5) is recommended. In our cool maritime climate, grapes have a tendency to put on vegetative (leaf and vine) growth at the expense of fruit production and maturing. **DO NOT FEED LATE IN THE SEASON**—it can force excessive growth and spoil the fruit.

Your grapevine will not need any pruning until the first winter. Pruning requirements differ depending on grape type. Generally canes are stretched along wires and small branches along the canes are pruned back to two buds each.

It is possible to have fruit the first year after planting and a good crop the second year if you plant in a hot sunny location. Vines are considered mature at about four years, and a well-cared-for vine may last over 30 years. Expected yield at maturity will be 6-10 pounds per vine.

Harvest your table grapes by taste and appearance. When you think a bunch looks ripe, taste one of the grapes near the tip of the cluster. If your grapes do not taste sweet no matter how long you wait, that is a good indication that you've selected a variety that needs more heat than you're giving it. Move it to a sunnier location or replace it with an earlier-ripening variety.

Wine grapes are all late-season, seeded varieties. Compared to table grapes, they produce much smaller berries in each cluster. This ensures that the pulp has a high ratio of skin to flesh; the skin carries the color, aroma, and flavor needed to make good wine. As they are late-season, some Northwest summers are not warm enough to ripen wine grapes fully. Be certain to give your wine grapes the best possible exposure to help ripening.

TABLE GRAPE VARIETIES: SEEDLESS (EXCEPT AS NOTED)

Black Monukka Red to purplish black. Midseason. Long clusters of large, sweet, crisp grapes. Heirloom variety; mostly seedless. Good for fresh eating and raisins.

Canadice Red. Early season. Long, large clusters of medium-sized berries. Sweet and juicy with a spicy vinous flavor. Very productive; sometimes needs to be thinned. Hardy to -15° F.

Flame Red. Midseason. Medium size clusters of red berries. Sweet flavor, crisp texture.

Interlaken Green to golden. Early. Small berries in medium size tapering clusters. Crisp and tangy. Moderately vigorous vines; very reliable variety for Puget Sound area. Hardy to 5° F.

Jupiter Red-purple to black. Mid season. Medium size, mostly seedless berries. Muscat flavor; excellent for eating fresh.

Lynden Blue Dark blue. Early season. Large clusters of sweet, flavorful, seeded berries. Compact plant; good for growers with smaller spaces. Like an early-ripening Concord.

Reliance Pinkish-red. Early. Large clusters of medium-sized, sweet grapes. Good fresh or for juices, jams, jellies and raisins. Very cold-hardy.

Suffolk Red Bright red to grayish pink. Midseason. Medium size, long loose clusters. Firm berries with pure, delicious, non-foxy flavor. Requires full sun, fertilizer, and irrigation for best performance. Hardy to 10° F.

Vanessa Red. Midseason. Medium size, well-filled clusters. Nice crisp berries with sweet mild flavor; skin is astringent if picked under ripe. Best with lower fertilizer; bred to resist rain at ripening time. Excellent table grape. Hardy to 10° F.

WINE GRAPE VARIETIES (LATE SEASON)

Siegerrebe Plum-purple. Small berried; intensely aromatic, sweet, and flavorful, with spice and grapefruit overtones. Grapes can be eaten, juiced or made into a great white wine.

Boskoop Glory Black. Late season. Award-winning Netherlands grape: cold-hardy and disease resistant. Nearly seedless; aromatic and flavorful. Good fresh or for dessert wine.