# GROWING GRAPE VINES

## SCHOOLCRAFT CONSERVATION DISTRICT
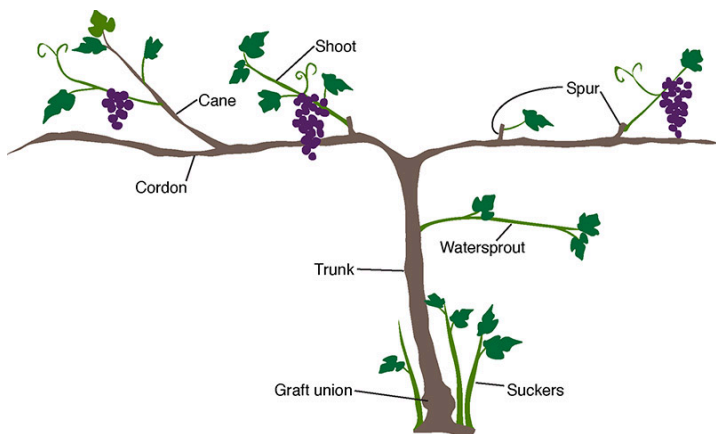(906 )286-2890 | SCHOOLCRAFTCD@MACD.ORG

**PRE-PLANTING CARE:** Store your plant in a cool, shaded location in its original packaging. Keep your plant out of direct sunlight, wind, and extreme temperatures. Keep the roots moist - NEVER LET THEM DRY OUT!

## QUICK FACTS

- Grapes are woody perennial vines.
- Plant in full sun to provide the heat required to ripen.
- Each vine needs about 6 feet of space.
- Flowers and fruit develop on new shoots called canes.
- It is possible to get fruit one year after planting.
- Flowers are pollinated by wind and insects.
- Vines can be trained to many decorative forms.
- Annual pruning is important to keep growth healthy each year.
- Prune in spring before leaves emerge.

| CARE THROUGH THE SEASONS | |
|---|---|
| MARCH | For existing vines, prune before growth starts. |
| MARCH-APRIL | Clean up all fallen leaves, fruit, and debris. |
| APRIL-MAY | Plant bare root grapevines as soon as soil can be worked. |
| MAY-JUNE | Plant potted grapevines after threat of frost has passed. |
| APRIL-JUNE | Rub off any shoots that start growing lower down on the trunk. |
| APRIL-AUG | Tie new growth to trellis as needed. |
| APRIL-OCT | Inspect vines to catch diseases and insect problems. |
| SEPT-OCT | Watch for bird damage; cover with netting as needed. |
| SEPT-OCT | Harvest fruit based on color and flavor. |

## CHOOSING A LOCATION

**Grapes prefer full sunlight and well-drained, deep, fertile soils with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5.** If soils are cold, wet and slow to drain, plants will not develop deep roots and vine development and fruit maturation will be slowed; in the long run, the vines will not thrive. Grape vines can also have practical purposes in the landscape. When grown on a trellis, they can be used along a property border and can provide some privacy during the growing season.



## PLANTING

1. Soak the roots in water for 3-4 hours prior to planting.
2. Remove all canes except the most vigorous one, and trim off any broken or excessively long roots.
3. Dig a hole large enough to accommodate the roots system without risk of overcrowding. Place vines with the lowest bud on the cane just above the soil surface.
4. Refill the hole with the original soil, tamping down as you go to prevent any air pockets. Water thoroughly.

Mulching is not usually recommended for grapes because mulch will keep the soil temperature too cool for warm-preferring grapes.

## CONTINUED CARE

SUPPORT: Grapevines need some type of support or they will trail along the ground. Virtually any type of support structure (e.g., arbor covering, posts, fencing, etc. )will do, provided it is sturdy. Grape vines grow quickly and get quite heavy.

WATERING: Young grapes require about 1/2 to 1 inch of water per week, depending on rainfall, for the first two years during the growing season. When watering young vines, saturate the root zone. Apply 5 gallons of water over a 3 x 3 foot area for 1 inch of water. By the end of the second growing season, a trunk should be established and your vine is likely to not need additional watering unless specific soil conditions (sandy, well drained )or prolonged drought dictate the need. Apply water only to the root zone; avoid getting grape foliage wet to prevent diseases.

FEEDING: The first two or three years, each early spring, apply compost around the base of the vines. Grape vines grow vigorously and might need a nutrient boost each year. You may not have to do this as the vines mature; it all depends on what you observe.

PRUNING: After the first season, your dormant vine will probably have one or several main canes, with skinny lateral canes growing off of them. Choose the healthiest 1-2 main canes, and remove the rest. Prune off all of the lateral canes that are branching off of the main one.
Tie this cane to a stake or to the fence and encourage it to grow straight up.