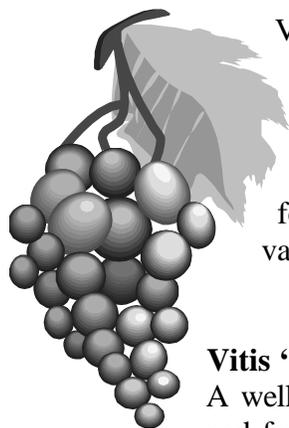


Unique Garden Centre

GRAPE

There are several excellent grape varieties to grow on the Canadian prairies. Grapes are grown for both their landscape qualities as a climbing vine and their fruiting. They do require a long, hot summer to produce ripe fruit, and should be planted in a sunny sheltered location, preferably with a southern exposure. Grapes are easily pruned to control size and promote larger grapes and earlier ripening. Grapes are not a prominent commercial fruit crop in the province, and are usually grown for home consumption. Grape vines growing up a trellis, with large clusters of fruit, are a beautiful addition to any backyard or greenhouse.



Varieties to grow here:

Vitis 'Valiant'

Small greenish – white flowers are followed by purple blue grapes in medium sized clusters. It is good for fresh eating, jelly or jam and fabulous for juicing. Valiant ripens in early to mid September, slightly earlier than other varieties. Vines grow from 8 to 20' long. Self pollinating.

Vitis 'Beta'

A well-know northern variety popular for its blue-black fruits which are commonly used for juice and jellies. Beta is a hybrid of the Riverbank grape and Concord. An excellent choice for a climbing plant where privacy is desired. Ripens early October.

Vitis 'Frontenac'

A red wine grape that has shown good hardiness for our zone as long as it has good winter cover. Frontenac produces good quality juice for wine making. A vigorous grower with good disease resistance. Vines will grow 8 to 20' long. Self pollinating.



Vitis 'Minnesota'

With reddish purple fruit larger than Beta and the sweetest purple grape, Minnesota is a popular grape to grow on the prairies. Vines will grow to 15' long. Minnesota ripens late September to early October. Needs a pollinator.

Planting a Grape Vine

It is best to plant in the spring. The soil should be worked with compost or fertilizer prior to the planting of seedlings; over fertilizing at planting may burn the root system. Dig a hole large enough to accommodate the root system. Allow 2.5m between plants. Leave enough space in the bed to allow wires or trellis to be laid flat to the ground in the fall. Prepare the plants prior to planting by trimming off extra-long or damaged roots. Place the seedlings in the hole, work good topsoil around the roots and firmly tamp the soil around the plant. Water the plants thoroughly. Keep the area free of weeds and grass, to allow for maximum water uptake. A mulch of crushed rock or other suitable material of 5-10 cm. will help control weeds and retain moisture.

Pruning

Pruning is key to control the size and quality of fruit. Pruning is started when the vine is initially planted in spring. Prune to only one stem, just beyond the second bud. This will promote two buds to emerge. In the fall prune these stems back, leaving only the two top buds on each. When these buds grow in the spring, tie them to a trellis for support. These 4 canes will remain as the main stems for the next several years. Each fall prune these canes to a length of about 60 cm leaving 4-5 buds on each cane and the lowest lateral shoots from each. Prune the shoots to only one node or renewal spur. In the second or third year, they will start to bear fruit. For longevity, it is advised to thin the developing grape clusters to only 1/3 of the annual crop for about 5 to 6 years. This enables the plant to develop a solid vegetative structure. Continue to prune in this manner until the 4 main stems become brittle. At this time remove them and all the renewal spurs to produce shoots that are trained to replace the old arms.

Winter Protection

Providing some additional winter protection is advised. In the fall after pruning and just before final freeze up, cover the base of the plants with a thick layer of mulch, about 15 cm. Remove the mulch in the spring, when danger of cold is past and prior to breaking of buds.

Propagation

If you wish to increase the number of plants you have by propagation, try cuttings. In the fall when you are doing the fall pruning, select a mature shoot with two successive buds. Cut just below the bottom bud and above the top bud. Bury the cutting a few inches deep in soil either indoors or outdoors. Other methods of propagation are from seed, layering and grafting.

Harvest

In the second and third year, clusters of grapes will be produced. Taste the grapes for ripeness, as mature size and color will be achieved before grapes reach full sweetness. Picking grapes by hand should be done by placing the hand under the cluster and using shears to clip it from the vine.

- For wine-making or table use - Pick grapes at their sweetest.
- For jams and jellies - Pick the grapes earlier as the pectin content is greatest before maturity is reached.

