



Growing grape vines

- The key is to spend some time on soil preparation before planting. The soil should be dug as far down as you can get incorporation lots of well rotted farm yard manure, its important that it should be well rotted because fresh manure will burn the vines roots.
- Ideally the vine should be planted so that the roots are always kept cool and the head should be grown into the sun or towards a sunny spot on a wall or trellis etc. To keep the roots cool you can place large stones or rocks around the base to help shield the soil from direct sunlight.
- In the first two years you should concentrate on forming a framework within the vine plant. This involves training the side branches and tying them to wires or trellis supports. The key points in this operation are not to tie the vine too firmly as the branches will expand over the next two years and the ties might constrain the branch to much and cause some damage.
- Secondly, by training the side branches horizontally this will help encourage fruit production later.
- Using 'a controlled (or slow) release fertiliser when planting will ensure that your plant is correctly fed and will grow at an optimum rate, remembering to re-pot as necessary. John Innes or general multi- purpose compost will usually have sufficient food for the first 4-6 weeks, if no food is added.
- The vine will produce small fruit in the first two years; this fruit is best left on the vine but thinned by removing 2/3rds of the grapes that have formed within each bunch.
- Finally in the third year you should have a good selection of fruits. At the start of the year, mulch with some well rotted farmyard manure around the base. You should no longer be feeding with liquid feed during the summer. The grapes will form again on the fruiting spurs and should be thinned in each bunch this time by one 1/3. They will develop over the summer then in late July you should remove some of the vines foliage around the grapes to allow the more sunlight to ripen the bunches.
- At the end of the year you should tie in the new shoots cutting then back by 25% to encourage the formation of new fruiting spurs the following year. Finally tar washing with Jeyes fluid in the winter has the advantage of killing all the pests that are over wintering in the stems and buds. This is carried out by mixing 1 part Jeyes fluid to 30 parts water and spraying it on to the vine until it runs off soaking the stems and branches.

■ Please have a look at www.easytropicals.com for companion ideas & a general hardiness guide. If you have any questions please email for a prompt reply.

Many thanks for looking.