



Aylett Nurseries
The Complete Garden Centre

Vine Culture

Information Leaflet No. 35



North Orbital Road (A414)
St. Albans
Hertfordshire
AL2 1DH

Tel: 01727 822255

Fax: 01727 823024

E-mail: info@aylettnurseries.co.uk

Web: www.aylettnurseries.co.uk

OUTDOOR VINES

Site:

Level land is perfectly satisfactory for vines. A southerly incline or slope may help, but it is not essential. Indeed too much slope only makes it difficult to work the area. Any reasonable sunny position will suite vines - even those which receive no more than a maximum of three hours of direct sunlight a day will suit most varieties. Excessively windy spots should be sheltered by means of a hedge or artificial windbreaks to prevent undue cooling or damage. Frosts are normally harmless to dormant vines unless they fall to temperatures below those normally experienced in this country, but as with all fruiting plants late spring frost can nip the young shoots, and set them back. Notorious frost pockets are therefore best avoided.

Soil:

Generally vines are very tolerant of a wide range of soils. Free drainage is desirable but heavy soils are quite acceptable. In very heavy clay vines appreciate ridging. Very light soils will require fertilising especially well.

Planting:

This may be carried out either in spring or autumn. Vines in the dormant sate will be unharmed by frost as long as the roots are tucked under the soil. Space vines 1.2-1.5m (4-5') apart. Rows should be 1.6-1.8m (5-6') apart.

Typical garden soil in good condition will need little by way of preparation apart from a good dig over. For rapid development, a hole should be dug about 30cm (12") deep and 30cm (12") wide. A little well-rotted compost should be mixed with the topsoil portion which is then put back so that it surrounds the roots. They should be spread out well with the soil packed firmly about them.

The bottom bud (or in the case of a grafted vine, the graft) should not be closer to the surface than 5cm (2"). Vines pruned back hard for delivery will not always show obvious buds. These will soon appear. The lighter the soil, the deeper the roots should be. When vines are to be planted against a wall their roots should be at least 30cm (12") from the foot of the wall.

IN TIMES OF DROUGHT IT IS IMPORTANT TO WATER YOUNG VINES WELL ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT SOILS.

Feeding:

In February apply a general fertiliser at 70g per sq. Metre (2oz per sq. Yard), and Sulphate of Potash at 15g per sq. Metre (½oz per sq. Yard), to an area 30cm on either side of the vine.

Dessert grapes should be fed every weeks with a high Potassium fertiliser such as a tomato feed from a month after growth starts in the spring.

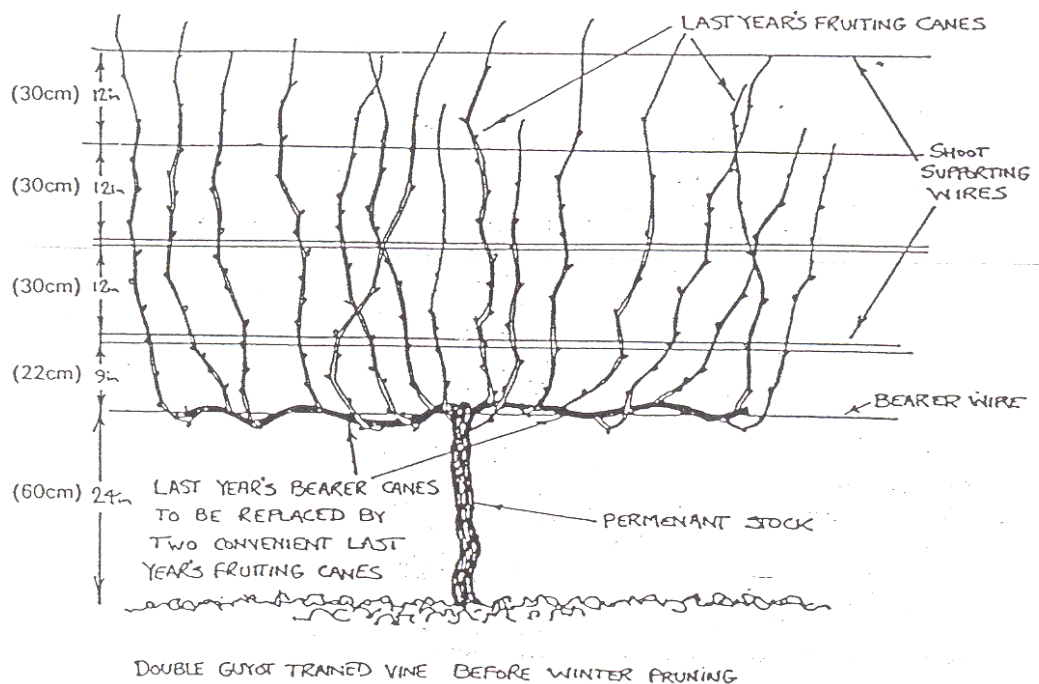
Training and Pruning:

New vines may not break bud until the end of May or sometimes even later. A 1.5m (5') stake should be provided for each vine and as growth proceeds a loose but firm tie should be made every 15cm (6") or so.

First Year

Only one shoot should be allowed to grow in the first year, all others being pinched out. All laterals and tendrils should be pinched out as they appear during the first two years of the vine's life only. Depending on soil, site and weather, growth in the first year will be anything from 15-200cm (6"-6') or more.

At the end of September pinch out the leader to assist ripening the wood. A series of training wires should now be set up. A stout post is placed at both ends of each with intermediate posts every 7m or so, leaving if possible 1.8m (6') above the ground. A bottom wire 2mm (12g) is stretched 60cm (24") above the ground and four pairs of double wires 2.5mm (14g) are stretched above as shown on the diagram.



Second Year

In January or February working from the growing tip, cut back bud by bud with a sharp pair of secateurs until you reach ripe healthy wood - brown outside, pale green inside.

If this point is above the bottom wire and at least 6mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ ") thick bend the cane onto the bottom wire, cutting off anything beyond ten or twelve buds along these wires. When the buds burst in the spring, rub out all those which appear more than 10cm (4") below the bottom wire. If you are lucky such vines will bear a little fruit in the second year, so proceed with them as for the third year treatment described below.

The ripe wood of most vines will either not yet have reached the bottom wire or it will be rather thin and weak. If this is the case these vines should be cut back to near the ground leaving two or three buds only. These vines should again only be allowed to produce one shoot in the second year, but they will grow longer and stouter than previously. All laterals and tendrils should be pinched out regularly as before, but in future years this need not be done. If during the summer the shoots grow up above the top wire they may be tied along to prevent damage. The leader should be pinched out at the end of September.

Third Year

In January or February cut back the cane and bend it onto the bottom wire as described above. Bending should be done carefully to avoid splitting the cane.

The buds along this cane will give rise to fruiting shoots in the coming summer. As these shoots grow they are simply tucked between the pairs of double wires.

Flowering will occur in late June or early July but NO LEADER PRUNING SHOULD BE DONE UNTIL THE SHOOT HAVE TOPPED THE TOP WIRE BY 24cm (9"). At this time except when re-shaping the vine, all shoots springing from the stock more than 10cm (14") below the bottom wire should be rubbed out.

The vintage date will depend on the variety and weather, but as in Germany it will usually be in mid-October or may even be as late as early November. Some early varieties will be ripe in September in good sites. A few extra fine autumn days will often make significant difference to the sugar content of the grapes.

Fourth & Subsequent Years

In January or February select two healthy canes as the next bearers. They should spring from as near to the stocks as possible and be cut back to 45-60cm (18-24") depending on the vigour of the vine. They should be bent down in opposite directions.

All other wood is removed except a two or three bud replacement spur (if it has appeared), growing from the stock as near the bottom wire as possible. Shoots springing from this spur will provide extra canes for replacement next year and help keep the vine in shape.

This form of pruning is carried on year after year and is called Double Guyot pruning.

Birds:

These start to become a problem as soon as the fruit reaches a certain degree of ripeness, which is usually at the beginning of September but can be earlier. The only complete protection is netting which is a simple matter in the case of a small plantation.

GREENHOUSE VINES

In all but the coldest situations most vine varieties used for the production, will thrive happily in an unheated house. Very high temperatures are not required, and if excessive, are more likely to cause problems such as scorch. For this reason, and in order to deter mildew, ventilation should be adequate.

Planting:

Plant in the same way as outdoor vines. This may be done inside the greenhouse, but ideally planting is done outside so that the roots may develop without restriction and be well placed to absorb natural rainfall.

Feeding:

In February apply a general fertiliser at 70g per sq. Metre (2oz per sq. Yard), and Sulphate of Potash at 15g per sq. Metre (½oz per sq. Yard), to an area 30cm (12") on either side of the vine.

Dessert grapes should be fed every week with a high Potassium fertiliser such as a tomato feed from a month after growth starts in the spring.

Training & Pruning:

First Stage

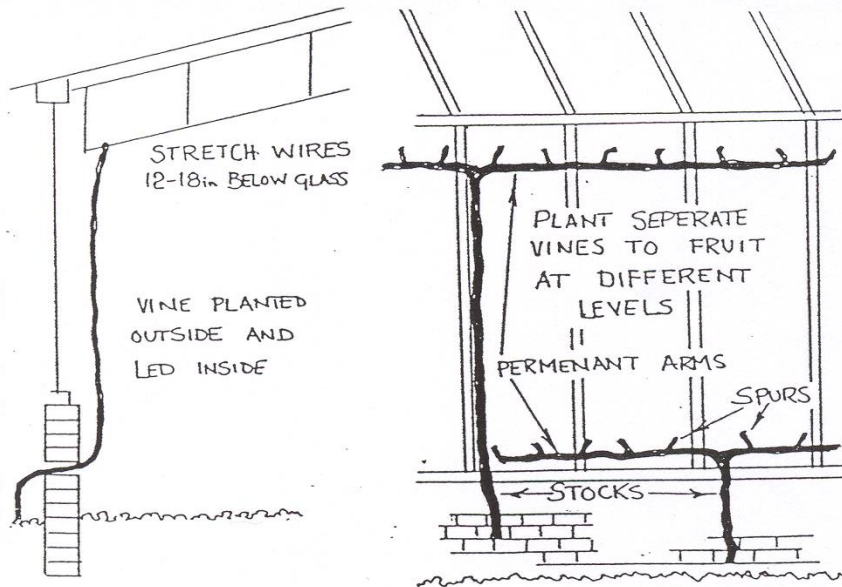
When growth begins only one shoot should be allowed to develop, and as soon as it is long enough, or at the end of the first season, it should be led inside the house by way of a hole in the wall. It is then grown on to the height at which it is desired the vine should crop. The time taken to grow this 'stock' will depend on the soil, the vine variety and the weather, but it should be achieved by the end of the second season if not the first.

Second Stage

In the next year two shoots are grown in opposite directions. These shoots will often bear grapes as they grow. They will become the permanent bearer-arms. They should be stopped at about five feet each in their first year, but they may be allowed to extend a little each year to match the vigour

of the vine. The bearer- arms should be secured to a wire running at least 45cm (18") below the roof so that subsequent growth will not be crowded by the glass.

Do not train bearer-arms at different levels as the growth will tend to be made at the highest point at the expense of the rest of the plant. If fruiting is desired on both the walls and the roof individual vines should be planted to fruit at different levels.



Third Stage

In the season after these arms have formed, each bud along their length will break into a fruiting shoot. These too should be trained along wires at least 45cm (18") below the roof if they are to fruit at that level. If growth is very vigorous shoots may be pinched back, but not closer to the flower than five or six leaves. The aim should be a balance between enough foliage for the production of food and sugar, and over-crowding leading to loss of sunlight and susceptibility to mildew.

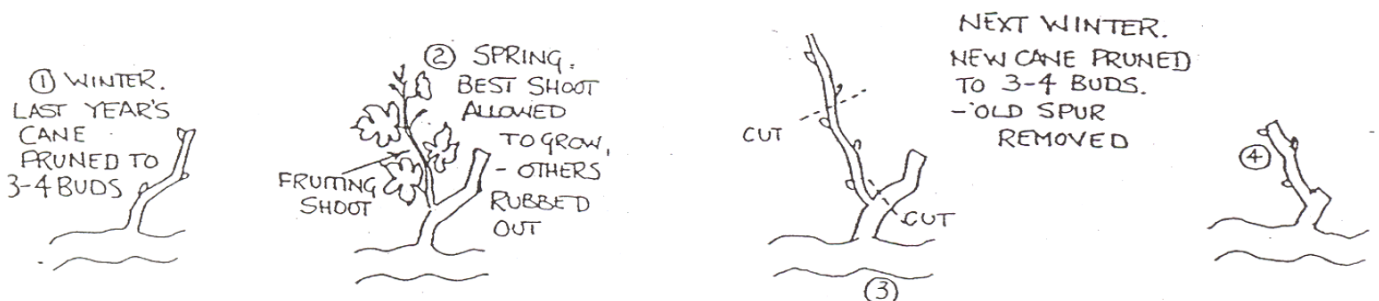
Ongoing Care:

Most indoor vines benefit from the light use of a soft brush on the flowers to assist pollination. Just after fruit-set grape bunches destined for dessert use may be thinned to approximately half their number by means of pointed scissors, in order to yield fewer but larger berries. Grapes intended for wine making need not be thinned.

At the end of the first fruiting year winter pruning should be carried out as below. A strong cane should be selected about every 30cm (12") along each bearer-arm and cut back to a four-bud to a four-bud spur. All other canes should be removed entirely.

When buds break in the following spring the strongest only is allowed to develop on each spur. It is advisable to wait until the flowers are visible before selecting these shoots in order to retain those which are most fruitful.

This form of spur pruning is then carried on from year to year, the use of 'watersprouts' being made when it is necessary to carry out any re-shaping.



SPRAYING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOTH OUTDOOR AND GREENHOUSE VINES

Vines grown in England can be subject to a few of the more common vine maladies. These are Downy Mildew (*Plasmopara*), Powdery Mildew (*Oidium*), Grey Mould (*Botrytis*) and Red Spider Mite.

No fungicides are currently available for use on edible crops. Red Spider Mite can be treated with a biological control (a predatory mite called *Phytoseiulus*).

**This leaflet is available in
alternative formats.**

Please ask a member of staff or
Tel: 01727 822255
Email: info@aylettnurseries.co.uk

Last reviewed January 2023