

# MUSCADINE GRAPE

## JUST FRUITS & EXOTICS

30 ST. FRANCES ST.

CRAWFORDVILLE FL 32327

OFFICE: 850-926-5644 FAX: 850-926-9885

[JUSTFRUITS@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:JUSTFRUITS@HOTMAIL.COM)

[WWW.JUSTFRUITSANDEXOTICS.COM](http://WWW.JUSTFRUITSANDEXOTICS.COM)

### INTRODUCTION

Most Southerners picked muscadine grapes in the wild as children. Sometimes called Scuppernongs or fox grapes. These spicy-sweet, thick-skinned grapes are an old Southern favorite and are still found growing wild throughout the lower South. They thrive with little care, and the vines can remain productive for 100 years! Modern breeding has brought us a wonderful range of varieties: wine grapes for the home vintner and jelly maker, plus delicious fresh-eating varieties, which can be as large as golf balls! Some muscadine grapes are self pollinating, while the female varieties need a self-pollinating variety to help them set fruit.

### USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Grapes add a touch of old world charm to any landscape. With large, lush leaves and gnarled, shaggy-barked trunks, grapes are particularly attractive with clusters of fruit hanging down through the foliage. Use them on fences to divide areas or create hidden gardens within your larger landscape picture. Train them over a patio for a living roof that's cool and shady, but drops its leaves in the winter to let the warm sun in. They can also be trained into small weeping trees for interesting accents in the border or in a large container.

### PLANTING AND CULTURE

#### SITE SELECTION

Grapes do well on a wide range of soils, but rich sandy loam or clay loam soils are preferred. Grapes do not tolerate flooding and may grow poorly in mucky soils unless planted in raised mounds. Plants will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Grapes prefer slightly acid soil (pH 6.0-6.5), but soils of up to moderate alkalinity are tolerated. If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take a soil sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test.

#### SITE SELECTION AND PLANTING

Enrich the bed with aged manure, compost or pine bark mixed with soil dug from the hole (50:50 mix). Beds may be mulched with organic mulches. The grape should be planted in the middle of the main posts of your trellis.

Remove the grape from the pot, gently loosen the root ball, cut any roots that swirl around the edges of the root ball, and place the grape in the planting hole. The grape should be planted **at or slightly above**

the same level at which it grew in its pot. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT** put fertilizer in the planting hole. Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the vine approximately 36 inches in diameter. Space grapes 20 ft. apart. Mulch in spring with 4-6 inches of weed-free mulch.

## **WATER**

The first weeks are the critical time for the establishment of a new grape. Water every other day for the first week after they are set out. After plants are established, water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply.

## **FERTILIZATION**

We use and recommend the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Espoma's Citrus Tone is a good choice for muscadine vines. When not available look for an organic mix that contains an analyst of roughly 5-2-6. Make sure they contain iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to type and age of plant, so read the instructions on the bag and fertilize accordingly. Be sure to spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant avoiding a 2-inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in. For Zones 8a-10, fertilize 3 times each year in February, May and late July/early August. For plants further north (Zone 7), fertilize 2 times each year in March and June/July. Never fertilize after August (July in Zone 7) as this will promote new growth when the plant needs to go dormant.

Grapes need more magnesium than many other fruit. Magnesium deficiency shows as a progressive yellowing between the veins of older leaves and may cause premature fruit fall. To prevent or correct magnesium deficiency, Epsom salts can be applied at the rate of 2-4 ounces for 1-2 yr. old vines and 4-6 ounces for older vines (recommended application rates from the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service). Spread the Epsom salts over a 6 ft. circle around each plant.

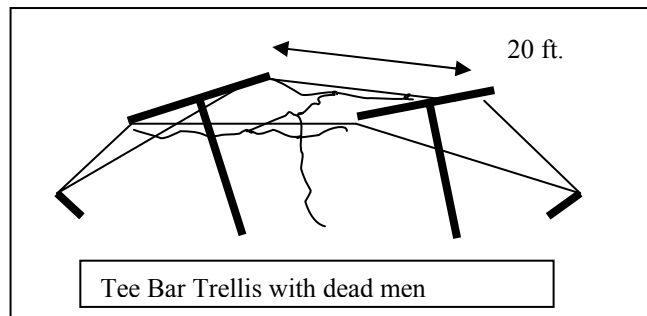
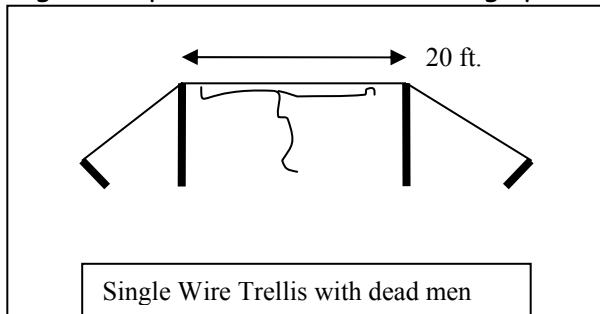
## **BUILDING A TRELLIS AND TRAINING THE VINES**

You do need to train grapes to a trellis to get them to fruit. It's a little more work to start with, but the result is a long-lived, productive vine. The single wire trellis is the simplest method, and the one most used by commercial growers. Two and three wire horizontal trellises offer great possibility for use as living fences. The tee bar trellis is our personal favorite. It offers the greatest yield for the least amount of labor in pruning and is the easiest to pick. Overhead arbors are beautiful additions to the orchard and offer a wonderful place to sit and rest and enjoy the view. They're a little more work to set up and prune, but well worth the effort. We'll explain the single wire and tee bar trellises here, but the same construction principles apply to all trellises. For any trellis, choose sturdy materials designed to last the life of the vine. Posts should be pressure treated lumber at least 4X4 in diameter and 8 ft. long; wire should be at least 9 gauge in diameter. Your goal in training your muscadine vine is to grow the vine in a form that will produce fruit over many years. The basic shape (modified somewhat depending upon the trellis you've built) is a single trunk 5-6 ft. high and 2-4 arms each 10 ft. long. For a single wire trellis, you'll train the vine to a single trunk and 2 arms, each 10 ft. in length with fruiting spurs at 6 in. intervals. For any double wire trellis (including the tee bar), you'll have 4 arms, each 10 ft. long with fruiting spurs at 6 in. intervals. For an arbor, you'll figure out how to shape your vine's arms over the top of the arbor while keeping the 2 or 4 arm structure.

**SINGLE WIRE TRELLIS:** Set 8 ft. main posts 20 ft. apart, sinking posts 3 ft. deep. Sink dead man support posts 3 ft. deep approximately 7-8 ft. from each end post in your row of grapes, angled away from the last main post. Attach trellis wire from the end dead man post, across the top of the main posts and to the end dead man post using heavy duty wire staples. Install turnbuckles between the end posts and the dead man posts so the trellis wire can be tightened as needed over time.

**Year 1:** Your goal is to train the vine to the trellis, developing a single trunk. Choose the strongest shoot on the vine and remove any extra shoots. Use a stake or a string tied to the trellis to wind the shoot around so it will grow to contact the trellis in the middle of the 2 main posts. Pinch the shoot tip off when the vine reaches the trellis level.

**Year 2:** Your vine should have reached the level of the trellis and you should have pinched out the tip. Several shoots will form at the tip. Choose the strongest 2 shoots and train them along the trellis wires in opposite directions. You're done when the arms reach 10 ft. long and the vine looks like an elongated "T". Do not allow the arms to wind around the wires. Shoots will grow from the young arms and all should be allowed to grow to produce the first fruiting spurs. Remove all extra shoots from the trunk as needed.

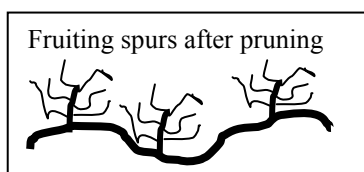


**TEE BAR TRELLIS:** Set main posts 20 ft. apart, sinking posts 3' deep. Sink dead man support posts 3 ft. deep approximately 7-8 ft. from each end post in your row of grapes, angled away from the last main post. Nail a 4 ft. bar to each main post to form the top "T" of the tee bar. Attach 2 trellis wires to one of the end dead man posts, continuing to the ends of each T bar, and then ending at the end dead man post. Use heavy duty wire staples. Install turnbuckles between the end posts and the dead man posts so each trellis wire can be tightened as needed over time.

**Year 1:** Your goal is to train the vine to the trellis, developing a single trunk. Choose the strongest shoot on the vine and remove any extra shoots. In the middle between 2 main posts, tie a string between the wires and tie a second string to the middle of the first string. Twine the vine around the dangling string and train it to reach the string between the trellis wires. Pinch the shoot tip off when the vine reaches the trellis level.

**Year 2:** Your vine should have reached the level of the trellis and you should have pinched out the tip. Several shoots will form at the tip. Choose the strongest 2 and train them along the string between the trellis wires. Pinch tips of the 2 arms when they reach the wires (the vine should be in the shape of a "T" at this point). Two shoots will grow from each of the 2 tips you pinched back and they should be trained in opposite directions along the wires to a length of 10 ft. per arm. There will be a total of 4 arms in an "H" shape when viewed from above, attached to the main trunk in the middle of the bar in the "H". Do not allow the arms to wind around the wires. Shoots will grow from the young arms and all should be allowed to grow to produce the first fruiting spurs. Remove all extra shoots from the trunk as needed.

## PRUNING FOR FRUIT



Fruit is produced on new shoots developing from the previous year's growth. In Year 3, canes produced the previous year should be pruned to approximately 3 in. long in January or February. These canes will produce several shoots that will fruit during the following summer. These new shoots will be cut back to 3 in. the next winter, forming the first fruiting spurs.

Depending upon the growth rate of the plants, spurs will need to be thinned in Year 5 or 6 after planting. During the winter pruning, remove every other shoot, aiming for a fruiting spur every 6 in. on each arm. Choose spurs on the top of the vine, if possible. Allow a few extra shoots to grow from the arms to form replacement spurs as the vine ages. Remove tendrils twining around the arms or spurs to prevent girdling.

## **POLLINATING MUSCADINE GRAPES**

Choose at least one self-pollinating grape to pollinate up to four females. If you want only one grape, choose a self-pollinating variety. Ideally, every third grape in a row should be self-fertile to pollinate adjacent female plants. Females should be no more than 30 feet from a self-fertile pollinator.

## **MUSCADINE VARIETIES (*Vitus rotundiflora*)**

**FOR MORE VARIETIES GO TO OUR WEBSITE [WWW.JUSTFRUITSANDEXOTICS.COM](http://WWW.JUSTFRUITSANDEXOTICS.COM)**

### **NEED POLLINATION: Female Muscadine Grapes**

**BLACK BEAUTY** By far one of the sweetest grapes. Large, 1¼ inch fruits are black-skinned and juicy. Excellent disease resistance. Ripens early to mid-September. Zones 7-10.

**BLACK FRY** Beautiful, big 1¼ inch dusty black fruit. Ripens mid to late September. Good fresh or for jelly. Zones 7-10.

**SCUPPERNONG** Excellent flavor, great production. 17% sugar. Small clusters of bronze fruit. Ripens mid-season. Zones 7-10.

**SUMMIT** Thought by many to be better than Fry as a commercial grape. Red-bronze fruit is 1 inch in diameter. 20% sugar content, Ripens early September. Excellent fresh eating grape. Zones 7-10.

**SWEET JENNY** Whopper-sized bronze fruits are 1½ inches in diameter. Extremely high sugar content of 23%. Ripens mid-season (Sept.). Zones 7-10.

### **SELF-POLLINATING**

**ALACHUA** Premier fresh eating and wine grape. Medium size black grape is sweet and juicy. Excellent production. Ripe Sept. - Oct. Zones 7-10.

**CARLOS** One of our best pollinator grapes. Produces lots of small, 1/2 inch bronze fruit. Excellent for jelly and wines. Zones 7-10.

**COWART** Excellent pollinator grape, maybe even the best. Big production of large black fruit. Great for juices and jellies. Ripens late September. Zones 7-10.

**FLORIDA FRY** Florida's answer for the Fry grape's problem with summer dieback. Bears heavy crops of large bronze grapes. Very sweet, excellent for fresh eating. Zones 8-10.

**NESBITT** A black fruited variety from North Carolina. Ripens over a month-long period. Flavor is a delicious Concord flavor with a spicy fox-grape twist. Zones 7-10.

**NOBLE** Florida red wine grape. Makes beautiful dry red wine. Blend with Southland for a pink chablis, very productive. Zones 7-10.

**SOUTHERN HOME** Excellent red wine grape if you're inclined. Hybrid of a muscadine and a bunch grape. Beautiful, oak-shaped leaves. Fruit is almost black. Zones 7-10.

**SUNRISE** Our own find. This variety is very large, up to 1 inch in diameter. Bronze color with a crispy, almost bunch-grape flavor. Skins are thin. Ripens in late August. Zones 7-10.