

# Grapes and Muscadines (Vitis spp.)



**Exposure:** Full sun to light shade. Muscadines zone 7 and warmer. Table and wine grapes zone 3 and warmer.

**Soil:** Average well-drained garden soil. pH tolerant. Drought tolerant once established.

**Growth habits:** Grapes are climbing or creeping vines with large leaves. The plants produce large clusters of grapes in late summer. Their late blooms generally avoid spring frosts. Prune annually for best fruit production. Plant muscadines 20 feet apart; plant table and wine grapes 6 feet apart.

**Landscape uses:** Trellises, arbors, or fences in the home landscape. Grow on chain-link fences to soften the view. Or you can have the vines grow up a post with the fruiting vines forming an umbrella. Our easy-to-grow varieties are suitable for home or commercial vineyards.

**Edible/Medicinal properties:** Muscadine grapes' purple/black or bronze colored fruit is sweet, musky, and delicious. Their thick skins are very high in beneficial antioxidants, resveratrol, and anthocyanins (in the purple/black varieties), which are valuable for optimal health and disease prevention. Their grapes are wonderful fresh or can be processed into juices, wines, meads, pies, or fruit preserves.

Table grapes' sweet, juicy, thin-skinned fruit has many of the same nutritional and medicinal qualities as muscadine grapes, but in lower concentrations. Leaves are edible. Use grapes for fresh eating, juice, wine, or fruit jellies or preserves.

## Caring for your grape plants

**Pruning:** Prune grapes and muscadines in the late winter while they are still dormant, but after the coldest freezes are over. As a general rule, in February prune off all but 2 to 4 buds from the stems that grew the previous year. Grapes must be pruned annually to achieve annual harvests.

**Watering:** The grapes will likely need to be watered once week if there isn't enough rain. For smaller grapes with more intense flavor, water less often while the fruit is forming. For bigger, juicier grapes, water more frequently.

**Fertilization:** Apply a good general purpose fertilizer in April and June.

**Support:** Muscadines and grape vines need a sturdy support, such as a wire trellis or wooden arbor.

## Frequently asked questions about grapes and muscadines

My grape or muscadine hasn't leafed out yet. Is it dead?

The grapes and muscadine varieties we sell leaf out late in the spring, generally after the last frost. Muscadines leaf out later than table and wine grapes, with 'Southland' often waiting until June. To see whether a muscadine is alive, scrape the bark on a vine. If there is green under the bark, the plant is alive. Just be patient.

Japanese beetles are eating the leaves. What should I do?

We generally leave them be. They will be gone in a few weeks and they eat the leaves at a time when thinning the leaves is beneficial to the plant by allowing more sun and airflow to reduce fungal infection and letting the plant conserve moisture.

If you want to remove the beetles, we like to take a quart yogurt container with a little water and a drop of dish soap, place the container under the leaf with the beetles, and tap the leaf so the beetles fall into the water. You can feed the beetles to chickens.

What's the white fuzzy stuff on the grape leaves?

Probably a fungus, such as downy mildew. Muscadines are less likely to be bothered by pests than table or wine grapes. You can spray with an organic fungicide, such as Organocide, if you want. Mildews are unlikely to be fatal to the plant.

### **Additional information**

See the Useful Plants Nursery website at [www.usefulplants.org](http://www.usefulplants.org) for videos demonstrating planting and other plant care techniques.