

# PRUNING GRAPEVINES

By Tim Parker

Grapes are prolific growing vines. The aim of pruning is to check excessive growth and to provide enough fruit bearing shoots for the coming season, Grapes fruit on new seasons growth which rises from buds on the previous years canes. A heavy pruning of up to 90% of the last seasons growth is required each winter.

## Young Vines

During the first summer that the vine is planted, select the strongest leading cane and tie this to a support stake (all other growth is removed). When growth reaches the top of the first support wire, it is tipped back. This causes the 2 lower buds to form lateral shoots, which are tied down along a wire to form the 2 fruiting arms. In the following winter these lateral arms are cut back leaving 3-4 buds remaining and all other laterals arising from below the selected arms are removed.

## Pergola Vines

The principles of training a young vine to grow up a pergola are the same. During the first summer the vine is in the ground, select the strongest shoot and tie this to the pergola support and remove all other growth. In the first winter, prune back the main shoot by at least half its length to wood that ism at least a pencils thickness. also remove any lateral shoots that have arisen. During the second summer, this main leading cane should reach the desired height of the top of the pergola. When this happens the vine is tipped back (this will cause new shoots to arise from the buds immediately below). If 2-4 of these shoots are selected, they should provide enough framework to, in time, cover the pergola. In the following season shoots developing off the main arms can be thinned out, trained and tied to cover the area required. Once the final shape is established, all lateral shoots off the main arms are annually spur or cane pruned inly.

## Spur or cane pruning established vines.

In Perth, established vines are winter pruned in August. By far the majority of table grape varieties are **spur pruned**. In spur pruning the canes produced off the main framework arms are cut back to a short spur of 3 buds. Ideally spurs are spaced every 15-20cm along horizontal arms. All other growth is removed including growth arising from below the main arms. The following winter the 2 upper canes are removed and the lower one is cut back to 3 buds from the spur. Generally each fruiting cane will produce 2-3 bunches of grapes. *Spur pruning varieties include: Cardinal, Ribier, Italia, Ruby seedless, Flame seedless.*

Some grapes such as Sultana, require **cane pruning**. This is because these varieties do not produce enough fruitful canes when spur pruned. As a result a number of long canes are left to ensure a good crop. In cane pruning 3-4 of the strongest canes are selected off the main arms and cut back to lengths of 10-15 buds. The canes are then twisted or tied to wires. Two canes are selected to be replacement spurs. These 2 canes (one each side of the vine) are cut back to a 2 bud spur. From the 2 bud spur a strong vegetative shoot will arise and in the following winter, these canes can be cut back to form fruiting canes.



**FORRESTFIELD**  
160 Hale Road  
Ph 94536533  
Fax 94539520

**SWANBOURNE**  
153 Railway Street  
Ph 93849652  
Fax 93832108

**O'CONNOR**  
388 South Street  
Ph 93147258  
Fax 93147264

**JOONDALUP**  
Cnr Joondalup Drv  
& Cord St  
Ph 93000733  
Fax 93001244

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