

## **TIPS FOR THE CLAY GARDENER**

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Exclusive to Florida Times Union My Clay Sun  
For Publication on Saturday, December 27, 2008***

Grapes are pruned in January, although this is a chore that can be delayed up to March 15<sup>th</sup>. If grapes are left unpruned, since they bear fruit on the new wood, they form their fruit farther and farther out from the main trunk each year that goes by. With time, the grapes are forming so far from its root system that they suffer from water stress and nutritional deficiencies. They become smaller in size and fewer in number.

To avoid this, grapes are “renewed” each year through pruning. Doing this without seriously reducing production is a skill that usually must be



shown to an individual by someone who knows how to do it, but it is not that difficult.

In the case of Muscadine grapes (which are our most commonly grown grape) it starts with training the grape so that it has two permanent 5-8 foot arms

going in opposite directions down a heavy duty, rust-proof wire 6 feet off the ground. This is all done the first year.

The second year of growth will see shoots coming off these two permanent arms to bear grapes. At this time of year all those shoots need to be cut back. Pruning the second season involves cutting off all shoots that come from the permanent arms of the vine to a point where they only have 3-5 buds. When you are done, the pruned vine will resemble antlers with lots of side points on them.



In future years you will do the same thing but only cut back to where the season before stub was left. Old vines look quite strange but they will keep bearing for more than 50 years if pruned and trained in this manner.

If your Muscadine is growing on an arbor (structure that is roof like), you still need to renew it each year as well for good harvest. With arbors, we generally allow three main trunks/arms to come to the top of the arbor and then fan out. Each year thereafter we keep these three main arms and only cut back to them leaving 3-5 buds on each stub as before.

This is confusing I know, so to learn more about this, go online to whatever search engine you use and type in [Fruits & Nuts – UF/IFAS Extension:](#)

Solutions for Your Life - once there click on specific fruits which will take you to information on all types of fruits – then just go to Muscadine grapes.

Want someone to answer a specific plant question for you? Go online to <http://clay.ifas.ufl.edu> and under the heading “Horticulture” (left hand side of page) click on “Ask a Master Gardener” and a reply will be sent plus a hyperlink to the appropriate University of Florida Fact Sheets. To speak to someone by phone, call 269-6355