

## The Pieces and Parts of Grapes

It's March and that means it's time to think about pruning your woody fruit plants. In general, this is a good month to start pruning in North Dakota. The coldest weather should be over and it shouldn't be too long before new growth will close over the pruning wounds. You still have some time - you just want to get it done before the buds start to swell. Today, we'll talk about grapes because they can be such a mystery to everyone.

A perfectly trained and pruned plant will look like the one in the picture. Yours probably won't be perfect like this, but use it as a general guide for the structure of the plant.

All trained grapes have a vertical **trunk** and then horizontal **cordons**. These parts are considered 'permanent' though they can be renewed if something happens to them.

The area where you do your major pruning each year is on the **spurs**. These areas were the original lateral (side) shoots of the original canes you tied onto the trellis wire. Each spring you cut back those old lateral shoots (called **canes** once they turn woody) so that there are only 2 or 3 live buds left there. In a few years you get this woody, knobby area that we call the spur.

The live buds that will produce this year's fruit are on last year's canes and are called '**count nodes**' or 'count buds'. These will have smooth, reddish- or tannish-colored bark. Older parts of the plant will have grey and peeling bark.

Only 1-year-old wood has fruit buds. That's why we cut away all that other growth. Removing old canes invigorates the plant to grow new shoots that turn into next year's canes. Good grape pruning will remove 85-90% of last year's wood. Don't worry – all the energy the grape needs to grow is down in the roots. You will NOT kill the plant by removing all that old stuff! You will make great fruit for yourself and possibly your neighbors.

Look on our website for a more detailed description of pruning.

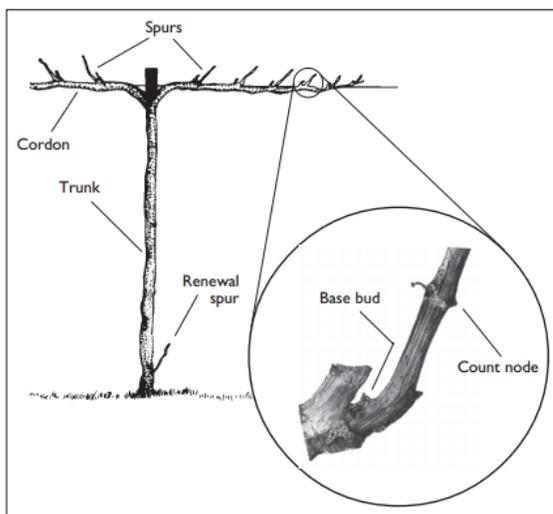
Here are two excellent pruning videos from Oregon State University:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=um9p1eiGiwI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=um9p1eiGiwI)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISMLIZpH7so](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISMLIZpH7so)

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Spur close up, base bud and count node are shown



Poling, Barclay, and Sara Spayd. *The North Carolina Winegrape Grower's Guide*. "Chapter 6: Pruning and Training, p.75-90." <http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/chapter-6-pruning-and-training.pdf>