



Vineyard Establishment Checklist

It takes **a lot** of resources, commitment, and preparation to successfully plant and establish a vineyard. Use this checklist to see if you are ready to start a vineyard and what tasks still need to be completed before you plant.

Site and Location Characteristics

Tasks	Ideal Timing	Date(s) Completed
Collect a preliminary soil sample of each prospective vineyard block and send it to the lab.	2 years before planting	
Collect a water sample and send it to the lab to test for irrigation suitability.	2 years before planting	
Determine well output (gallons per minute).	2 years before planting	
Record information on the aspect of slope & the percentage of slope on each potential planting block.	2 years before planting	
Produce and print a soil map of the property using the Web Soil Survey .	2 years before planting	
Check elevation – absolute elevation and elevation relative to surrounding topography. Identify air & water drainage pathways.	2 years before planting	
Submit soil samples for nematode analysis.	2 years before planting	
Complete a comprehensive soil evaluation. Dig soil pits up to 4 feet deep and have a professional evaluation of drainage, soil structure, soil texture & root limiting factors.	2 years before planting	
Create a list of wildlife (deer, raccoon, birds, possum, wild boar, etc.) that may impact your vineyard and determine how to combat these threats.	2 years before planting	
Establish a list of local/regional pests & diseases that you will need to contend with & educate & prepare to proactively address these.	2 years before planting	
Create a list of grape varieties that are proven to grow well in your area. Then, narrow the list to 2-3 varieties that you are most interested in growing, and identify <u>specifically</u> why these varieties will be successful in your region, and the expected marketability to wineries for each variety.	2 years before planting	
Create a list of rootstocks that are suitable for grafting for your desired grape varieties (presuming you will need to use rootstock in your region). List why these rootstocks are best suited for your soil & for the variety you wish to plant.	2 years before planting	

Support Resources

Tasks	Ideal Timing	Date(s) Completed
Establish contacts & become a member of your local grower organizations and online educational organizations such as Virtual Viticulture Academy . Learn more.	2 years before planting	
Visit vineyards in the region where your vineyard is planned; taste wines and talk to the people who manage the vineyards.	2 years before planting	
Create a list of local resources such as university staff or extension associates.	2 years before planting	
Establish contact with local & national resource conservation programs to determine if grant assistance is available for farm infrastructure such as irrigation, pesticide storage facilities, or other vineyard-specific items.	2 years before planting	

Vineyard Infrastructure

Tasks	Ideal Timing	Date(s) Completed
Identify a functional water well or the cost to drill a well.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	
Game/Deer fencing - is the property fenced / what is the cost to install fencing.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	
Ensure access roads are in place for all sections of the planned vineyard.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	
Identify an appropriate tractor with an enclosed cabin & air-conditioning.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	
Identify the appropriate vineyard sprayer for your maximum vineyard size.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	
Identify the appropriate herbicide sprayer for your maximum vineyard size. (herbicide sprayer must be used for herbicides only).	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	
Purchase a small utility vehicle for driving yourself, your gear, and your vineyard consultant around the property and in between vine rows such as a Kawasaki Mule or John Deere Gator.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	



Personal Attributes

Tasks	Ideal Timing	Date(s) Completed
Ensure support from family/friends as you transition and learn to be a grape grower.	Before you commit	
Acquire finances of \$20,000 to \$30,000 per acre for desired vineyard size (do not spend your retirement funding on this).	Before you commit	
Commit working hours from February through October with no significant vacation during that time if you are managing the vineyard.	Before you commit	
Hire a full-time vineyard manager for vineyards over 10 acres.	Before you commit	
Identify grant dollars available for specialty crop farming &/or young farmer or new farm / ranch initiatives.	2 years before planting (budgeting phase)	

Learn More

If you are ready to take the next step, check out our comprehensive 6-module [Online Prospective Wine Grower Course](#) (members click [here](#)) that provides everything you need to start and grow your vineyard successfully.

Was this helpful? - Visit [Virtual Viticulture Academy](#) to learn more and view over 100 more Grower Guides.

