



LAND MANAGEMENT

RURAL

WINE

How easy is it to plant my own vineyard?

Q1 2017

Home > Knowledge and Research > How easy is it to plant my own vineyard?

With interest in winemaking growing in the UK, Nicholas Watson, from Strutt & Parker's consultancy team in Lewes, takes a look at what you need to create your own vineyard. If you would like to join the dozens of people with their own vineyard in the UK, here are a few things you'll need to know.

Where to start?

There are two routes to vineyard ownership – creating a new one from scratch or taking over

an established vineyard.

In 2015, there were 502 commercial vineyards owned by 133 wine producers in England and Wales registered on the UK Vineyard Register (UKVR). On top of these, there were 87 vineyards classified as hobby vineyards, as their production is not sold or recorded.

All vineyards larger than 0.1 hectares must be registered with the UKVR, as should any smaller ones that operate commercially. Registered vineyards must provide details of:

- Size of vineyard
- Areas for different vine varieties
- Annual harvest and production

How large does my vineyard need to be?

It depends on your goals. If it's simply for your own consumption, then size isn't an issue; a single vine can produce up to 3 bottles of wine from a good harvest.

If you hope to establish a profitable business, the minimum size you need is 5 acres. And that's if you're selling your wine direct to the consumer. If you aim to sell to the wholesale market, you'll need at least 7 acres to make it profitable, but ideally more to achieve economies of scale.

Where can you do it?

In the UK there are vineyards as far north as Yorkshire. In fact, vines will grow on many sites, but to make the most of your investment through maximum grape yield, the right site is key.

The best sites are found on free draining, gentle south-facing slopes that aren't exposed to strong winds or late frost, are not too high, and where average temperatures and sunshine hours are highest. The soil type and site characteristics, or 'terroir', as the French say, is reflected in the taste of the wine. For sparkling wines loam over chalk



Nick Watson

Partner, Land
Management



How long does it take?

As anyone who's tasted an excellent bottle of wine knows, it takes time, skill and a little luck with the weather to produce the best. It also requires patience, as it will take four years (for still wine) to eight years (for sparkling) from planting before your wine ready for sale.

You will enjoy your first harvest three years after planting, but the full yield from your vines won't be achieved until the fifth year. You should then expect an average yield of about 3 tonnes per acre from which you will produce roughly 2500 bottles of your very own wine.

If you're interested in buying an established vineyard, Lower Eastcott Farm is currently for sale. It has 6 acres along with its own award-winning modern winery.

Like this? Share it...



LUXURY LIVING RESIDENTIAL

The Ebb and Flow of International Buyers: Exchange Rate Challenges and Opportunities

Q1 2017

Property Search Services People Offices Knowledge & research Publications
Careers Modern Slavery Act Contact

is traditionally favoured, but vines can thrive on many soil types as long as the soil is free draining and matched to the appropriate root stock.

Vines can be grown in many locations, but the best are in the sunnier, drier parts of the UK such as the south east of England.

How much does it cost?

Arable land in the UK sells for £8,000 to £10,000 per acre. The supply of land coming to the market each year is limited and of that only a tiny proportion will be suitable for vineyard planting. As a result, most vineyard land is purchased privately and a premium market is developing. Land suitable for vineyard planting often sells for more than £15,000 per acre and so your budget will need to include a realistic land cost.

It can't be stressed enough how important getting the right site is. The upfront investment costs of establishing a vineyard are high, when you consider such things as soil conditioning, establishing vines, and putting in wires and fencing. Establishment costs of £12,000 per acre are normal and the vines take five years to reach full productivity. So achieving a high quality and consistent output from your vineyard is hugely important – and much of this comes down to the site and soil.

What equipment do I need?

It is up to you. To engage contractors who manage your vines, pick your grapes and transport them to an established producer, with whom you have contracted to sell your harvest, requires very little of your own equipment. A vineyard tractor and topper is probably all you will need.

However, if you wish to undertake all of the husbandry, winemaking, bottling, cellarage and marketing yourself, you will need all of the vineyard equipment, a winery, cellarage, staff and offices. This level of investment requires diligent planning, budgeting and significant finance.