



CURRANTS AND GOOSEBERRIES

Currants and gooseberries, *Ribes sativum* and *Ribes grossularia*, are shrubs that bear abundant berries. While some people enjoy eating them right from the bush, currants and gooseberries are so tart that they are usually used in jams, pies and other desserts.

PLANTING SITES

- Both grow well in medium to heavy soils. Soil pH can be neutral, slightly alkaline or slightly acidic. (Most Inland Northwest soils are in this range.)
- Plant in sun or partial shade. Since they bloom fairly early, avoid frost prone areas.
- Both currants and gooseberries are alternate hosts for white pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*), a disease that attacks fine-needle pines such as western white pine. If any of these pines are nearby, consider planting other small fruits.

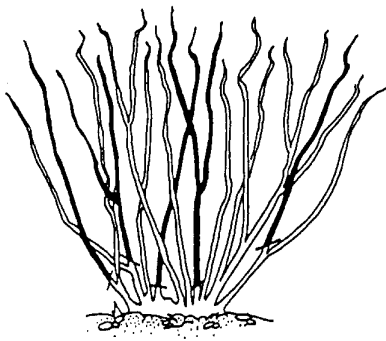
ESTABLISHMENT & CULTURE

- Currants and gooseberries are available at nurseries in spring, but can also be planted in fall after leaves drop.
- Plant four feet apart.
- Work in organic matter 6 to 8 inches before planting. Approximately 40 lbs of well rotted manure or compost per 100 sq. feet is recommended.
- Plants will bear fruit at two years, but won't bear full crops until their 3rd or 4th year.

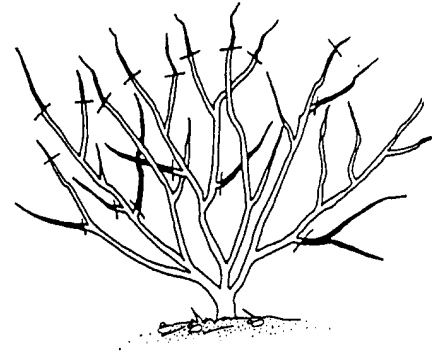
TRAINING AND PRUNING

Currants and gooseberries are grown as free-standing bushes or in hedge rows. Gooseberries can reach 5 to 7 feet at maturity. They have thorny, arching canes. Currants are more erect and are thornless.

- Use more thinning cuts (removal of an entire branch back to the base) rather than heading cuts (shortening a branch).
- If bushes are not pruned yearly they will become brushy with low yield.
- 2, 3 and 4 year old canes are most productive.
- Maintain only 6 to 12 canes per plant.



Thinning-out cuts promote branching



Heading-back cuts promote development of new wood on 2 to 3 year-old wood

HARVEST AND USE

Harvesting currants and gooseberries is a slow process. Currants ripen over a two-week period but will hold for another week. It is not necessary to remove stems from currants intended for jelly or juices, as they will be strained.

Gooseberries ripen over a 4 to 6 week period. Pick when full-sized and proper color. Remove the blossom and stem ends before cooking.

Both fruits can be used in jellies, jams and preserves, juiced, or frozen for later use. All *Ribes* fruit are high in vitamins A, B and C.

VARIETIES

Red Currants

Red Lake - Berries are medium to large, uniform, juicy, and flavorful. They ripen during the mid to late season. Canes are moderately vigorous, stand erect and are only moderately resistant to powdery mildew. Clusters are long and easy to pick. One of the best red currants for home production.

Perfection - Berries ripen during early mid-season and are large, uniform, juicy, flavorful. They have a thin tough skin. The cluster stems are long and easy to pick. Canes are small, only moderately dense and moderately resistant to powdery mildew. One of the most cold hardy. Canes are susceptible to breaking and the fruit sunscalds easily if not picked soon after ripening.

Wilder - The berries are variable, tending to be small to medium in size. They are tender, juicy and of good quality. They are borne on long, easy-to-pick clusters and hang on the canes for a long time after ripening. Canes are erect to slightly spreading and are very resistant to powdery mildew.

White Currents

White Imperial - Fruit varies in size, ranging from medium to large. Berries are juicy and tender. Canes are medium-sized, vigorous, spreading and highly resistant to powdery mildew.

Gooseberries

Green: *Captivator* - medium-sized, smooth, green fruit with good flavor. Canes are moderately vigorous, erect and less spiny than other varieties.

Oregon Champion (thornless) - Fruit ripens during the midseason, is small, white to pale green, tart and has a thin tough skin. Canes are large, vigorous, erect to spreading and quite resistant to powdery mildew.

Red: *Poorman* - Dull-red fruit ripens over a long period, beginning in midseason. Berries are small to medium in size, sweet and aromatic, with tough smooth skin. Canes are very large, erect to spreading, reasonably free of spines and quite resistant to mildew.

Pink: *Pixwell* - The fruit is small to medium in size, green, and hangs in clusters below the canes, making it easier to pick than some other varieties. Canes are vigorous, erect to spreading, and very resistant to mildew. One of the most reliable gooseberries in North America.

DISEASE AND INSECT PROBLEMS

Powdery Mildew

A fungal disease that is characterized by a whitish powdery growth on leaves, shoots and fruit. This coating usually makes fruit unusable. Humid conditions and crowded plantings that reduce air flow favor mildew. Begin fungicide spray at delayed dormant stage in late winter or early spring. Apply again when buds begin to open and again at full bloom.

Currant Aphid

Common on currants and occasionally found on gooseberries. Small yellowish aphids begin to appear when leaf buds open in spring. Feeding causes a cupping distortion and red color on leaves. Apply an insecticide or insecticidal soap when aphids appear. Repeat as necessary according to label directions.

Currant Fruit Fly (Gooseberry Maggot)

Larvae bore out of infested berries, fall to the ground and enter the soil in the summer, where they overwinter as pupae in brown cases about the size of wheat grains. Flies emerge from the soil in the spring and lay eggs in developing gooseberry or currant fruit. The currant fruit fly is one of the most serious pests of gooseberries and currants.

No chemical controls are registered for homeowners. Shallow cultivation under bushes can help to expose egg cases and larvae to predators.