



## CURRENTS AND GOOSEBERRIES

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

### PLANTING SITES

- Both currants and gooseberries grow well in medium to heavy soils. Optimal soil pH is around 5.8-6.8, but they can tolerate slightly alkaline soils (most Inland Northwest soils tend toward slightly acidic).
- Plant in sun or partial shade, in areas with good air circulation. Since currants and gooseberries bloom early, avoid frost prone areas. In areas with summer temperatures frequently above 90°F, consider planting in part shade.
- 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 or use rust resistant varieties.

### 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; bushes will be 2 -to 5-feet tall.
- Work in organic matter 6-8 inches before planting. Approximately 40 lbs. of **well-rotted** manure or compost per 100 sq. ft. is recommended as these plants prefer high concentrations of organic matter.
- 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 and have thorny, arching canes. Currants are more erect and are thornless.

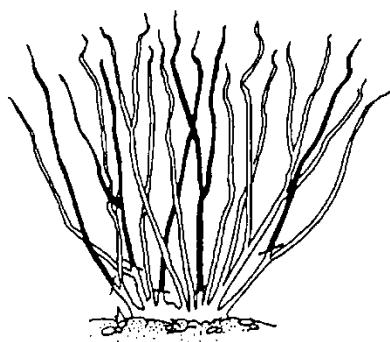
- Prune in late winter (early March)

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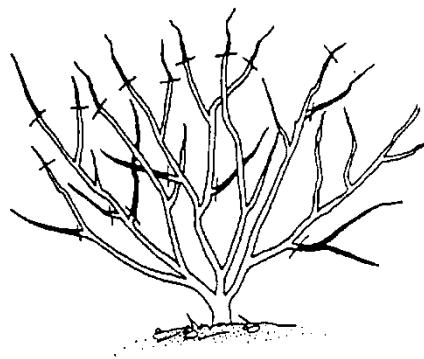
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## C025 – Currants & Gooseberries

- 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- and 3-year-old canes are most productive. Prune 4-year-old canes with thinning cuts.
- Maintain 9 to 12 canes per mature plant.
- Remove canes that are 4 years or older



Thinning cuts promote branching



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

## HARVEST AND USE

Fruit can be eaten fresh, used in jellies, jams, preserves, juices, and wine, and can be frozen for later use. All *ribes* fruit are high in vitamins A, Bs, and C. For fresh storage, cool picked fruit quickly and keep in a sealed container to maintain humidity. Fruit will last several weeks in the refrigerator.

Gooseberries ripen over a 4- to 6-week period; currants over a 2-week period but will hold for another week. Pick gooseberries when full-sized and proper color.

When using for jams or jellies, harvest early for higher pectin levels. Remove the blossom and stem ends before cooking. It is not necessary to remove stems from currants intended for jelly or juices, as they will be strained.

## VARIETIES

### *Red Currants*

Red Lake	Berries are large, uniform, juicy, and flavorful. They ripen during the mid to late season. Canes are moderately vigorous and stand erect; they are susceptible 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, and flavorful with 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.

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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.
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### *White Currants*

Blanka	Late flowers. Fruit is late ripening, very productive, and very resistant to frosts with a mild and sweet flavor.
White Imperial	Fruit is pinkish white, medium to large, juicy, and tender. Canes are medium-sized, vigorous, spreading, and highly resistant to powdery mildew.

### *Gooseberries*

Captivator	Medium-sized, smooth, pink to reddish purple fruit with good flavor. Canes are moderately vigorous, erect and less spiny than other varieties.
Oregon Champion (thornless)	Fruit ripens during the midseason, is medium to large, yellow to green, tart, and has a thin tough skin. Canes are large, vigorous, erect to spreading, and quite resistant to powdery mildew. Excellent for processing.
Poorman	Dull red fruit ripens over a long period, beginning in midseason. Berries are medium in size, sweet, and aromatic with a tough, smooth skin. Canes are very large, erect to spreading, reasonably free of spines, and quite resistant to mildew.
Pixwell	The fruit is small to medium in size, starts green and turns purple, 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.

## DISEASE AND INSECT PROBLEMS

Common diseases for currants and gooseberries include anthracnose (leaf spot) and powdery mildew.

Common pests include the brown marmorated stink bug, currant aphids, the gooseberry maggot (currant fruit fly), and the imported currant worm.

Disease descriptions, insect predators, and management options for currants and gooseberries can be found at WSU extension website [Hortsense](#)