



# CURRANTS & GOOSEBERRIES

FROM THE  
ANDERSON'S  
FRUIT GROWING GUIDE  
BY MARK ANDERSON

# CURRANTS & GOOSEBERRIES

**Despite their very different names,** both currants and gooseberries are related in species: *Ribes*. Plants consistently grow 3-5 feet tall and wide and have an attractive(,) toothed leaf that provides amazing colors in the fall, usually red, orange, or yellow. Currants have no thorns, but gooseberries can be either thornless or thorny depending on variety. Both plants are self-fruitful, and will produce colorful clusters of fruit all on their own. Flowers appear in early spring, followed by fruit set and ripening in early to mid-summer.

**Black Currant:** These have a rich, strong flavor and are commonly used for juicing, and in jams and preserves. They are the most difficult of the currents to find commercially.

**Red and White Currants:** More tart and less sweet than black currents, both these varieties are used for jellies and jams.

**Gooseberries:** They have unusual (yet attractive) perpendicular stripes and are somewhat larger in diameter than currants. The fruit is very tart and used mostly for pies and canning. Some varieties are sweeter and can be eaten fresh as well as preserved.

**Jostaberry:** A less hardy hybrid between currants and gooseberries. Has a similar taste to black currant, without the astringent, puckering quality.



**Location:** Open site in full sun or partial shade. Pick a location that gives you access to the plant from all sides for easy picking.

**Soil:** Currants and gooseberries prefer well drained soil with a high organic matter content - the less clay the better. Plants are susceptible to salt damage if soil or water has high concentration of sodium.

**Planting:** Plant in late fall or early spring. Plants prefer a thick mulch which helps keep down weeds, maximizes water retention, and cools the soil in hottest summer temperatures. They grow well in containers that are a minimum of 16" deep and 18" wide. See attached bare root and container planting guide.

**Water:** Make sure to provide regular water throughout the growing season - usually a deep watering every 7 days depending on heat and sun exposure. As the plants mature, maintain soil moisture during the growing season.

**Fertilizer:** Use a balanced fertilizer in early spring with micronutrients to maintain consistent growth and fruit production. We recommend Anderson's Best: That's All It Takes, Fertilome Fruit, Nut and Pecan food, or Natural Guard Organic Fruit and Citrus Fertilizer. Minimal fertilizer is needed for the first year or two, but as the bush matures and grows, 1/4-1/2 cup of fertilizer

per plant in a 4'x4' area will provide ample nutrients. If iron chlorosis occurs, use a chelated iron supplement like EDDHA 6% Iron.

**Pruning:** Both currants and gooseberries grow vigorously and produce new shoots from below the ground each year, so regular pruning during the dormant season is imperative. For gooseberries as well as white and red currants, cut & remove any growth that is older than 3 years back to the soil line. For black currants, remove any stems older than 2 years. On most plants, older growth has a darker color and the bark tends to peel away from the stem.

**Harvest & Yield:** Harvest in late spring or throughout the summer depending on variety. Pick when all the fruit on each cluster has deep color throughout. Anticipate 6-10 pounds of fruit per plant.

**Pests:** Currants and gooseberries are relatively pest and disease free in the Intermountain West, but occasionally can develop mildew diseases. As needed, apply a general-purpose fungicide like Copper Soap from Natural Guard or Complete Disease Control from Monterey (both products are organic and very safe to use on edibles right up until harvest) to prevent and control disease outbreaks.

## CONSORT BLACK CURRANT

The Consort Black Currant, *Ribes nigrum* 'Consort', is an extremely productive, self-fertile variety, ripening late in the season. Its soft rich green leaves turn bright orange, yellow or red in the fall. The black fruits have a strong flavor, are medium in size, and borne in clusters. These rounded, juicy, sweet fruit, 1/4 inch in diameter, have a blackberry flavor and can be used for jelly, jam, or sauces. Consort is very hardy and a reliable producer. Immune and resistant to white pine blister rust and moderately susceptible to mildew, this currant plant is a spineless, deciduous shrub that grows 6 feet wide and 6 feet tall.



**Zones:** 4-8

## IMPERIAL

Imperial consists of clusters of beautiful, white, translucent medium to large berries with a pink blush. This is the sweetest and richest flavor of all the currants. It is similar to red currants in size and hardiness and ripens around mid-July. The flavor is milder, and sweeter than red currant, with lower acid content, but more closely allied in character than when compared to the black currant. The berries are somewhat inconspicuous but attractive nonetheless. They can grow up to 6' tall.



**Zones:** 3-8

## RED LAKE

This currant boasts large, deep red berries on medium clusters. It is strong and vigorous upright bush that will grow 4 - 6 feet tall and 2 - 5 feet wide. This is a popular high-yield variety on a shrub that forms a decorative hedge even when not in fruit. The cold hardiest of quality currants, 'Red Lake' often bears full-bodied fruit the first year after planting. Yields are reliably large; self-pollinating. It has no serious issues with diseases or insects, but wet, humid conditions could cause problems with powdery mildew. Used commercially and as ornamentals. Good for bird forage and windbreak plants. Red Lake is one of the most widely grown red currants. Early bearing; ripens in July.



**Zones:** 3-8

## PERFECTION

Perfection is widely known for its cold hardiness and vigor. These plants will produce large amounts of mildly tart berries that are great for eating or perfect for jellies. The relatively large berries ripen to dark red in July. They are self pollinating. Grows 4'-6' tall and 4'-6' wide.



**Zones:** 3-7

## PIXWELL

Gooseberries are in the same family (as currants) so they share a lot of similarities. However, the gooseberry tends to reach only 3'-4' tall and can be very thorny. But "Pixwell" is nearly thornless. Fruits on this plant hang on slender stems an inch below the branches where they're easy to pick — hence "Pixwell." It is very tolerant of all kinds of growing conditions, including shade, and needs very little – if any – special care. The plants can bear as early as their first and will ripen in July. Big green berries ripen to pale pink for tempting pies and preserves. No other single fruit or herb is as rich in different nutrients as a gooseberry. Gooseberries contain high amount of Vitamin C along with other nutrients like Vitamin A, iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium. Gooseberries are self-fertile and very drought tolerant. The flavor can be very tart, but become much sweeter as they ripen.



**Zones:** 3-8



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