



Gooseberries & Currants

Gooseberries and currants are closely related; they are also related to native currant plants such as the ornamental red-flowering currant. All varieties carried by Sky perform well in the Pacific Northwest. They are self-fertile but may bear more heavily if cross-pollinated.

Gooseberry plants are attractive deciduous shrubs. They have a compact, arching growth habit and are usually 4 to 5 feet tall at maturity. They are one of the first deciduous plants to leaf out in the spring; they drop their leaves in early fall. The fruits are borne singly along arching, thorny canes. Cultivated varieties bear larger fruit (up to 1" in diameter) and are easier to harvest and tastier than the native species. Gooseberry fruit is tart; many varieties need to be cooked to be enjoyed. They are used in pies, pastries, and preserves. Sometimes gooseberries are mixed with less acidic fruits to enhance their flavor.

Edible currant bushes have thornless canes and are more erect in their growth habits than gooseberries. They grow 4 to 6 feet tall, about half as wide, and are often used as edible ornamental hedges. Currant berries are borne in clusters. Red and white currants are milder in flavor than gooseberries and are the best for fresh eating. Black currants have a strong, distinctive flavor. Like gooseberries, currants are excellent in jams, jellies, and pastry. They also make a flavorful wine.

Sky also carries the jostaberry, which is a hybrid between a gooseberry and a currant. The fruit has characteristics of both parents.

Gooseberries, currants, and jostaberries do well in nearly any type of moderately fertile soil. They tolerate partial shade but produce best if given full sun. Regular fertilization is not usually required, but if you want more vigorous growth you can use an all-purpose or rose and flower food. Fertilize in early to mid spring before fruit set. Currants and gooseberries are fairly drought tolerant once established, but for best fruit production irrigate during dry periods. Mulch drip zones of plants with compost.

Each cane will produce fruit for several years, with the second to fourth year canes being the most productive. Unpruned plants can become overcrowded with canes, reducing the fruit size and increasing the potential for disease problems. For best production, thin the plant to 10 to 12 canes to start. Each year in early spring, prune out 3 to 4 old canes and allow 3 to four new ones to grow; prune out the rest of the new growth. Prune each cane you're cutting out right down to its base. This allows a maximum of fruit-bearing wood to be maintained.

PINK CURRANT VARIETIES

Champagne Pink Currant Highly flavored, sweet, table variety. Translucent rosy pink when ripe. Heirloom variety. Grows 3-5 feet tall and wide. Very hardy.

RED CURRANT VARIETIES

Cherry Red Currant Large, dark red, high quality fruit. Tart flavor; grown commercially for redcurrant jelly. Resistant to powdery mildew. Very hardy and prolific.

Rovada Red Currant Large, dark red berries with an excellent balance of sweetness and tartness. From the Netherlands.

Rubina Red Currant Large clusters of dark red berries with an excellent sweet flavor. Hardy spreading variety from Sweden.

WHITE CURRANT VARIETIES

White Imperial Currant Loose clusters of translucent white berries with a pink blush. Very productive variety; fruit is sweeter, less tart than most red currants.

Zitavia White Currant Large, sweet, mild-flavored translucent white berries. Easy to grow upright shrubs with good disease resistance. From Germany.

BLACK CURRANT VARIETIES

Consort Black Currant Medium clusters of somewhat soft black fruit. Prominent, sweet, unique flavor. Excellent dried; good source of Vitamin C. Resistant to white pine blister rust; great in windbreaks.

Kantata 50 Black Currant Large, juicy, low-acid berries with the distinctive black-currant flavor and aroma. Very productive plants.

Lentaj Black Currant Jet-black berries are sweet-tart, great for fresh eating. Attractive compact bush.

GOOSEBERRY VARIETIES

Black Velvet Very large, sweet, dark purple-red fruit with almost blueberry-like flavor. Good for fresh eating or in jams, jellies, and desserts. Good disease resistance. Very hardy.

Hinnomaki Red Medium-sized dark red fruit. Tart skin and sweet flesh. Productive, disease resistant and very hardy variety from Finland. Grows about 3-5 feet tall and spreads farther.

Hinnomaki Yellow Medium-sized fruit is yellow-green when ripe. Very aromatic flavor with a luscious apricot aftertaste. Disease resistant and very hardy variety from Finland. Grows about 3 feet tall and spreads farther.

Oregon Champion Medium to large, oval fruit; green to yellow skin. Good quality, tart flavor. Plants are vigorous, productive, and mildew resistant. Popular variety, developed in Salem around 1876. Grows 3-5 feet tall and wide. Hardy to -35°F.

CURRENT-GOOSEBERRY HYBRID (JOSTABERRY)

Black Jostaberry Cross between a black currant and a gooseberry. Vigorous habit and high Vitamin C content of black currant; the berry turns almost black when ripe, with a full gooseberry flavor with black currant overtones. Resistant to powdery mildew and pine blister rust; thornless. Grows to 6 feet tall. Hardy to -35°F.

Red Jostaberry Cross between a red currant and a gooseberry. Vigorous and hardy plant is resistant to pine blister rust. Fruit is large and dark red, with a sweet-tart flavor. It is high in Vitamin C and good for fresh eating or in jams and jellies.