Gooseberries and currants are closely related and have essentially the same culture. 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.

Currants, also deciduous, have thornless canes and are more erect in their growth habits. They grow 4 to 6 feet tall, about half as wide, and are often used as ornamental hedges. Currants are borne in clusters like small bunches of grapes. Red and white currants are milder in flavor than gooseberries. Black currants are a separate species and have a strong, distinctive flavor. Like gooseberries, currants are excellent in jams, jellies, and pastry. They also make a flavorful wine.

Gooseberries and currants do well in nearly any type of moderately fertile soil. They produce best in 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.

Pruning is not strictly required, but the plants will produce more and larger fruit if pruned. Each cane produces fruit for several years, with the second to fourth year canes being the most productive. Plants can become overcrowded with canes, reducing the fruit size and increasing disease problems. For best production, thin the plant to 10 to 12 canes to start. Each year, then, 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. This allows a maximum of fruit-bearing wood to be maintained.

**CURRANT-GOOSEBERRY HYBRIDS (JOSTABERRIES)**

**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.
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.

**Captivator** Large, teardrop shaped fruit is reddish pink and sweet. Nearly thornless; easy to pick. Mildew resistant. Yellow fall foliage. Grows 3-5 feet tall and wide. Hardy to -35°F.

**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.


CURRANT VARIETIES RED

**Cherry Red Currant** Large, dark red, high quality fruit. Acidic flavor; grown commercially for currant jelly. Makes a great edible ornamental hedge. Resistant to powdery mildew. Very hardy and prolific.

**Red Lake Red Currant** Large, dark red berries in medium to large clusters. Early bearing; most widely grown red currant. Ripens July.

CURRANT VARIETIES BLACK

**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.

**Crandall Black Currant (Clove Currant)** Large, jet-black fruit in fall have a sweeter flavor than most black currants. Very ornamental plant: bright yellow, spicy-fragrant flowers in spring, good fall color.

CURRANT VARIETIES WHITE

**Primus White Currant** Very sweet white berries in medium to large clusters. Very high in Vitamin C; mild flavor. Very productive.

**White Currant** Sweet, mild-flavored white berries in medium to large clusters. Very productive.

**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.