

Currant Varieties for the Northwest & Intermountain West

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Growing and importing currants was once banned in Idaho and many other states because these crops are the alternate hosts of the blister rust disease that once devastated white and other five-needled pines in North America. European black currants are especially susceptible to the disease, while many red and white cultivars are resistant. As blister rust resistant pines were bred and planted, the need for the ban decreased and restrictions were removed. There are presently no restrictions on importing or growing currants in Idaho.

Although Idaho no longer restricts the importation or growing of currants and gooseberries, environmental risks continue. The disease is well established in native *Ribes* species, and continues to threaten non-timber, five-needled pines, such as whitebark pine. If you live in an area where five-needled pines can be found, select blister rust resistant or immune currant and gooseberry cultivars. Black currant cultivars 'Titania,' 'Consort,' 'Coronet,' and 'Crusader' are resistant to blister rust.

Black Currants

Expected yield: 5 pounds per bush

Age to maturity: 3 to 4 years

Productive life: 15 years or more

Cold hardiness: -20 to -31 F

Optimal pH: 5.8 to 6.8

Spacing: 4 to 5 feet apart in rows 8 to 10 feet

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Ben Alder	1	M	G	Berries produce juice of very high quality with high color stability. The canes are vigorous, and can become dense. Late flowering makes this

				cultivar somewhat resistant to spring frosts. High yielding under ideal conditions, but low yields and marked susceptibility to white pine blister rust have been reported from the northeastern United States. The cultivar yields better than 'Baldwin' and is seen as a replacement for it. The fruit can be harvested mechanically. Developed in Scotland ('Ben Lomond' x 'Ben More').
Ben Connan	1	L	G	Berries are deep black and considered suitable for commercial fresh and processing markets, as well as for home production. Not ideal for juice markets. Good resistance to leaf curling midge. Reportedly tolerates spring frosts and has produced high yields in tests in British tests. Compact growth habit and suitable for machine harvesting. Released in Scotland as a cross between 'Ben Sarek' and 'Ben Lomond'.
Ben Lomond	1	L	F	The berries have a tough skin, and ripen evenly on the cluster. Blooms later than 'Baldwin' and tolerates lower temperatures during bloom, making this cultivar a good choice for frosty sites. Yields are greater and more consistent than for 'Baldwin'. Canes are compact, spreading, and moderately vigorous. Susceptible to white pine blister rust. In areas away from five-needled pines, recommended for commercial production for both fresh and processing markets. Suitable for machine harvesting. Large, attractive fruit has potential for U-pick markets. Developed in Scotland and released in 1975. ('Consort' x 'Magnus') x ('Brodtorp' x 'Janslunda').
Ben Nevis	1	L	F	Generally similar to its sibling 'Ben Lomond', but the bushes are more spreading. In Northwest trials, it proved more susceptible to powdery mildew than 'Ben Lomond' and the flavor was rated poorer. Bred in Scotland and released in 1974. ('Consort' x 'Magnus') x ('Brodtorp' x 'Janslunda').
Ben Sarek	1	L	G	The berries have tough skins and ripen evenly. Short, tight clusters make hand picking difficult. Yields are high to very high under ideal conditions, but have been relatively low in some trials in the northeastern

				United States. Not recommended by the breeders for commercial juice production. A sibling of 'Ben More' and the first in a line of small-bush hybrids designed for high-density plantings. Developed in Scotland as an open pollinated seedling of 'Goliath' x 'Ojebyn'.
Boskoop Giant	1	L	F	Clusters are long, loose, and hang well on the bush after ripening. When pollination is poor, berries near the tips of the clusters often abort after they appear to be set. Canes are vigorous. Often used as a pollinizer of 'Silvergieters Zwarte' in Europe. Introduced from Holland via England between 1895 and 1900. Very popular for commercial production in the U.S. during the early 1900s. Nursery stock labeled as 'Boskoop Giant' is not always true-to-name. The fragrant leaves and buds are, reportedly, well suited for use in teas.
Champion	1	M-L	F-G	Berries are variable in size and mild-flavored with good to very good quality, but do not ripen evenly. The canes are vigorous and. One of the most popular black currants for commercial production in the U.S. during the early 1900s. Developed, probably from a chance seedling, in England around the 1870s.
Consort	1	S-M	P	The fruit flavor and overall quality are poor to fair. Developed in Ottawa, Canada as a cross between 'Kerry' X R. ussuriense. Released in 1951 to replace 'Crusader' and 'Coronet'. Resistant to white pine blister rust. Served as a parent of 'Ben Lomond'. If blister rust is a concern, 'Titania' is a better choice.
Coronet	1	M	P	A sibling of 'Crusader'. Developed in Ottawa, Canada as a cross between R. ussuriense x 'Kerry'. Released in 1948. Fruit quality and size are poor (similar to 'Consort' and 'Crusader'). Highly self-sterile and requires cross-pollination. Resistant to white pine blister rust. If blister rust is a concern, 'Titania' is a better choice.
Crandall	3	VL	E	A selection of the North American native <i>Ribes aureum</i> var. <i>villosum</i> D.C. (formerly <i>R. odoratum</i> Wendl.), also known as golden currant. This

				species is used most often as an ornamental and can reach heights of eight to ten feet although 'Crandall' has never grown more than four feet tall in Idaho or Pennsylvania trials. The canes are rather weak and droop to the ground under crop loads, making trellises desirable. Fully ripe berries have a mild, pleasant flavor that is very different from European black currants. 'Crandall' performs well in areas having hot summers. In Oregon tests, 'Crandall' proved highly resistant or immune to white pine blister rust.
Crusader	1	M	P	A sibling of 'Coronet'. Developed in Ottawa, Canada as a cross between <i>R. ussuriense</i> x 'Kerry'. Released in 1948. Fruit quality and size are poor (similar to 'Consort' and 'Crusader'). Highly self-sterile and requires cross-pollination. Resistant to white pine blister rust. If blister rust is a concern, 'Titania' is a better choice.
Kerry	1-2	M-L	F	Canes are vigorous and productive. A seedling of 'Naples'. Introduced as a cultivar in 1907 in Canada.
Strata	1	VL	F	The berries are sweet and suited for fresh use or processing. Canes are moderately vigorous. Yields are, reportedly, low in trials in the northeastern United States. A selection of <i>R. nigrum</i> from Germany.
Swedish Black	1	L	F-G	Berries are very sweet, having the highest sugar content and one of the best flavors of any black currant evaluated at the University of Idaho. Canes are moderately vigorous and tend to sprawl, making management somewhat difficult. Yields are, reportedly, low. Apparently a selection of <i>R. nigrum</i> from Sweden.
Titania	1-2	VL	G	Berries are borne on medium long strigs, ripens uniformly, and keeps well on the bush. Fruit has high acidity, low flavor, and is resistant to 'run-off' or premature abscission. Bitter fruit flavor has been reported in some trials. Highly self-fertile. Tall, vigorous, and high yielding canes tend to sprawl under heavy crops. Can suffer significant cane damage during mechanical harvesting. Except for one trial in Denmark, has been

				reported to be resistant to white pine blister rust. Suitable for commercial production due to its high yields and good processing quality, and for home gardens due to its disease resistance. Introduced in Sweden in 1984. An excellent choice in areas where white pine blister rust is a concern. Altajskaja Desertraja x [Consort x Kajaanin Musta]. In 2007, cane die back on Titania was widespread across North America. The cause appeared to be the fungal pathogen Botryosphaeria. Early reports are that the disease can be controlled with fungicides.
Topsy	1	L	F	The fruits are thick-skinned, and ripen during the mid-season. Canes are vigorous. Developed in Canada in approximately 1890, reportedly as a cross between 'Dempsey's Black Currant' and 'Houghton' gooseberry.
Ripens: 1 = early summer, 2 = mid summer, 3 = late summer, 4 = early fall, 5 = late fall Fruit size: S = small, M = medium, L = large, VL = very large Powdery mildew resistance: P = poor, F = fair, G = good, E = excellent				

Red Currants

Expected yield: 5 to 8 pounds per bush

Age to maturity: 3 to 4 years

Productive life: 15 to 20 years or more

Cold hardiness: -20 to -31 F, depending on cultivar

Optimal pH: 5.8 to 6.8

Spacing: 4 to 5 feet apart in rows 8 to 10 feet apart

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Cascade	1	L	F	The berries are high in sugar and have good flavor. Moderately vigorous. Released by the University of Minnesota in 1942 as a seedling of 'Diploma'.

Cherry	1	M	G	The fruit is variable in size and has excellent flavor and good quality. Short, tight clusters make hand harvesting difficult. Vigorous with variable yields. Suitable for home production. Probably originated in Italy. Introduced to the U.S. in 1846.
Diploma	1	L-VL	G	The berries ripen over a short period during the mid-season. They are borne in loose, medium-length clusters that fill poorly at the tips. Short clusters and tender fruit skins make harvesting difficult. Suitable for home production. Canes are vigorous, erect to spreading, productive, and resistant to powdery mildew. Developed in New York in 1885 as a cross between 'Cherry' and 'White Grape'.
Fay	1-2	M-L	F	Also known as Fay's Prolific. The fruit is firm and juicy with a thin, tough skin and excellent quality. Compact bushes with fair vigor and productivity. Better suited to home than commercial production. Developed in New York in 1868, possibly as a cross between 'Victoria' and 'Cherry'.
Jonkheer van Tets	1	M	F	The berries are variable in size, of average quality, and have a tendency to split in wet weather. The canes are erect and vigorous. Very popular in Europe. Developed in the Netherlands and released in 1941 as a seedling of 'Fays Prolific'.
Laxton's No. 1	1	M-L	F	Berries have good overall quality. The fruit is tightly bunched on moderately long strigs. The canes are erect to slightly spreading and very productive. A popular commercial variety in Europe. Developed in England between 1890 and 1900.
Minnesota No. 71	1-2	M-L	G	Berries have good, consistent quality. Canes are vigorous and erect. A popular cultivar for commercial production in England and one of the best red currants grown in North America. Developed in Minnesota and released in 1933.
Perfection	1-2	L	F	Berries are uniform, juicy, flavorful, and have a thin, tough skins. Cluster stems are long and easy to pick. The fruit sunscalds easily if not

				picked promptly after ripening. Canes are small, vigorous, only moderately dense, and susceptible to breaking. Very cold hardy. Possibly a good selection for commercial production in colder areas. Developed in New York in 1887 as a cross between 'Fay' and 'White Grape' and released in 1902.
Portal Ruby	1	L	F	The berries are tart. The canes are moderately vigorous. A selection of <i>R. rubrum</i> , originally from England.
Prince Albert	2	S-M	F-G	Sometimes confused with 'Red Dutch,' but the two cultivars are different. The fruit hangs on the clusters for an unusually long time. The clusters are long, loose, well filled, and have long, easy-to-pick stems. The canes are moderately vigorous. Excellent potential for a late-season cultivar, particularly for U-pick operations. Introduced into the U.S. from France in 1850, country of origin unknown.
Red Lake	2	M-L	F	Berries are uniform, juicy, and flavorful. Moderately vigorous. Clusters are long and easy to pick. Canes are moderately vigorous and erect. One of the best red currants for home production. Developed by the Minnesota Fruit Breeding Farm in 1933. Tested as Minnesota 24. Pedigree unknown. An excellent choice for commercial and home production.
Rondom	2	S-M	G	Thick-skinned berries hang well after ripening. Long cluster stems make hand harvest easy. Berries hang well after ripening. The canes are erect and vigorous. Although a popular commercial cultivar in Europe, there is clonal variation within the cultivar and it is important to get plants that show the desired characteristics. Developed in the Netherlands and released in 1946. Backcross of <i>R. multiflorum</i> to red currant cultivars.
Rosetta	2	L	F	Berries are tart. Long, loose clusters make hand harvesting easy. Canes are moderately vigorous. A promising introduction from Holland that does not have much of a track record yet in North America. Released in the Netherlands in 1974. 'Jonkheer van Tets' x 'Heinemann's Rote

				Spatlese'.
Rovada	2	L	G	The dark red berries have average flavor and ripen late in the season, just before 'Rotet'. Fruit clusters are long and loose, facilitating hand picking, and are moderately susceptible to run off. Resistant to leaf spot. A popular variety for commercial production in Central Europe due to its excellent fruit quality and yields. Also suited for home gardens. Developed in 1980 in the Netherlands. 'Fay's Prolific' x 'Heinemann's Rote Spatlese'.
Stanza	1-2	M-L	F	Berries ripen during the mid to late season. They are borne on short strigs that have long, easy-to-pick stems. Suitable for fresh use and especially for juicing. The flavor is acid. Canes are moderately vigorous and reliably productive. Released in 1967 in the Netherlands. A selection of <i>R. rubrum</i> .
Stephen's No. 9	1-2	L-VL	F-G	Canes are vigorous. One of the most popular red currants in North America. Developed in Ontario, Canada in about 1933. Parentage unknown.
Tatran	2	L	unknown	Berries have good quality and are borne on exceptionally long clusters. Yields are, reportedly, high. Canes are tall, vigorous, and noted for excellent cold hardiness. New to North America but reports from the northeastern United States are favorable. Developed in Czechoslovakia and released in 1985. 'Red Lake' x 'Goppert'.
Victoria	1-2	S-M	F	Reportedly synonymous with 'Wilson's Long Bunch'. Berries are firm, juicy, and have a tough skin. They are borne on short to medium, loose clusters, and hang on the clusters for an unusually long time. Canes are large, vigorous, erect, dense, productive to very productive, and very cold hardy. Developed about 1800 in England and has been confused, at times, with 'Raby Castle' and 'Houghton Castle'. At one time, it was called 'May's Victoria'. With mechanical harvesting and a processing market, it may still be a good commercial choice, despite the small fruit.

Viking	1-2	M	P-F	Canes are less vigorous than many cultivars. This cultivar's strong point is that it has proven resistant, although not immune, to white pine blister rust. Developed in Norway in 1945. A seedling of <i>R. petraeum</i> and <i>R. rubrum</i> , direction of cross unknown.
Wilder	1	S-M	G	Berries are variable in size, tender, juicy, have good quality. Long, easy-to-pick clusters hang without overripening for an unusually long time. Canes are vigorous and erect to slightly spreading. A seedling of 'Versailles', selected in about 1877 in Indiana. During the early 1900s, 'Wilder' was the leading commercial currant grown in New York. It remains a good choice today.
<p>Ripens: 1 = early summer, 2 = mid summer, 3 = late summer, 4 = early fall, 5 = late fall Fruit size: S = small, M = medium, L = large, VL = very large Powdery mildew resistance: P = poor, F = fair, G = good, E = excellent</p>				

White Currants

Expected yield: 5 to 8 pounds per bush

Age to maturity: 3 to 4 years

Productive life: 15 to 20 years or more

Cold hardiness: -20 to -31 F, depending on cultivar

Optimal pH: 5.8 to 6.8

Spacing: 4 to 5 feet apart in rows 8 to 10 feet apart

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Blanka	2	unknown	unknown	Noted as being late ripening, very productive, and very resistant to frosts. Released in Slovakia in 1977. 'Heinemann's Rote Spatlese' x 'Red Lake'.

Primus	unknown	S-M	unknown	Berries have good flavor. Fruit color is whiter than is found in most other white currant cultivars. Yields are reported to be high. Released in Slovakia in 1977. 'Heinemann's Rote Spatlese' x 'Red Lake'.
White Currant 1301	1-2	M	F-G	Moderately vigorous canes. Developed in Sweden as a white sport of <i>R. rubrum</i> .
White Dutch	1	S-M	G	Berries are juicy, sweet, and have excellent quality. They ripen very early and are darker than other white cultivars. Canes are medium-sized, vigorous, erect to slightly spreading, dense, and very productive. One of the oldest named white currants and has often been confused with other cultivars. Developed before 1729 in the Netherlands and probably introduced into America in the early 1800s. The small, uneven size of the berries is the main limitation of this cultivar.
White Imperial	1	M-L	E	Berries are juicy and tender. Moderately vigorous and productive. Canes are medium-sized, vigorous, spreading, and productive. Developed in New York in about 1890. An excellent choice for commercial and home production in North America.
White Versailles	1-2	M-L	G	Berries are juicy, have good quality, and are borne on long clusters. Canes are vigorous and erect. Has long been a leading cultivar in Europe. Developed in France prior to 1883. Parentage unknown.
<p>Ripens: 1 = early summer, 2 = mid summer, 3 = late summer, 4 = early fall, 5 = late fall Fruit size: S = small, M = medium, L = large, VL = very large Powdery mildew resistance: P = poor, F = fair, G = good, E = excellent</p>				