



Thursday, May 1, 2025

**ORDER YOUR ALMANAC TODAY!**[HOME](#) > [GARDENING](#) > [GROWING GUIDES](#)

# How to Grow Gooseberries: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: G. Tatiana/SS

**Bot** *Ribes*  
**ani-** *spp.*  
**cal**  
**Na**  
**me:**

**Pla** [Fruit](#)  
**nt**  
**Typ**  
**e:**

**Su** [Full Sun](#),  
**n** [Part Sun](#)  
**Exp**  
**os-**  
**ure**  
:

FREE GUIDE!



Har 3, 4, 5,  
di- 6, 7, 8  
nes  
s  
Zon  
e:

# Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Gooseberries

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: April 14, 2024



Sign up for daily gardening advice and tips

**SIGN UP**

ADVERTISEMENT

Discover how to grow gooseberries! From planting your first gooseberry bush to harvesting the sweet berries, we'll cover all your growing information. This is also an easy, reliable, prolific fruit bush that's the ideal choice for anyone new to growing fruit.

## About Gooseberries

A tasty treat that is hard to find in stores, gooseberries are a reward reserved for gar-

ADVERTISEMENT

gooseberry plants. They're often sold as bare-root plants but also as potted plants.

Gooseberries are very popular in England and Europe, but they were banned at the turn of the century in North America because they (and currants) could host white pine blister rust. However, the bans are now lifted for all but several states, plus there are disease-resistant gooseberry varieties. We're happy to see these sweet-tart berries are making a comeback.

Gooseberries are members of the genus Ribes (family Grossulariaceae), cultivated for their edible berries and as ornamental shrubs. They tend to be a little smaller than a grape, and their color can range from pale green to yellow to red. Their taste is a mix of blueberry, kiwi, and grape).

## ADVERTISEMENT

The varieties are usually described as either culinary or dessert varieties. Culinary gooseberries are usually cooked into jellies, pies, cobblers, and other desserts with sugar.

Dessert varieties are sweet enough to eat straight from the bush but are great for cooking too.

Gooseberry bushes grow well in most soils, are easy to prune, and are very high-yielding.

They are self-pollinating, so you can only need one to produce fruit. Each gooseberry bush produces about 10 pounds of fruit per year.

Gooseberries are also a prolific choice for northern gardeners who can't grow those juicy warm-weather fruits. Most varieties are cold hardy down to USDA zone 3, and some survive in zone 2. If you've always wanted fruit trees and not bushes, many train well as "standards," which is nursery speak for a bush that is trained into tree form with a single stem, like a rose tree.

Here's another benefit! Gooseberries are considered a "superfruit" as the berries are high

also high in fiber, potassium, and vitamins A and C, and antioxidant-rich.

ADVERTISEMENT



Gooseberries come in green varieties or you can grow sweeter red varieties.

Credit: Edvard Ellric

Read Next

- [How to Grow Currants: The Complete Guide](#)
- [5 Flavorful Superfruits to Grow This Spring](#)
- [How to Grow Elderberries: The Complete Guide](#)

## PLANTING

Gooseberries aren't fussy, but they'll grow and yield best in a sunny position in rich, well-drained soil. The plant will naturally grow into vigorous bushes, but they may also be trained as standards on a long single trunk, or against a fence as fans or single-stemmed cordons.

They can be successfully grown in containers, too.

### When To Plant Gooseberries

Plant bare-root or container-grown gooseberries from late fall to early spring, any time the ground isn't frozen solid. Southern gardeners should do fall planting, allowing the plant to establish itself without worrying about hot summer weather stressing the plants.

If you buy bare-root plants, they can and should be planted as soon as possible after receiving them. Dormant gooseberries (no leaves yet) can be planted in spring as soon as the soil can be worked.

### How To Plant Gooseberries

Both will grow well, but bare-root plants may be significantly less expensive. They often grow better in the first year than potted plants.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

For bare-root plants, soak the roots in a bucket of water for 12 hours or so before planting—don't let them dry out. I keep them in the bucket and take them to the planting site.

- Dig a generous planting hole twice as wide as the root ball and about as deep. If planting bare-root shrubs, you'll likely be able to see the old soil line on the trunk as a discoloration. The hole should look like a shallow bowl with sloping sides, not a coffin.

- Loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole.

Either dig and refill it or use a garden fork to work it. Mix well-rotted compost or manure with the excavated soil.

- Try to avoid having a hard surface at the edge of the hole, which can be challenging for new roots to penetrate.
- Lightly water the soil in the hole before planting.
- Cut any circling or girdling roots. Use a garden trowel or soil knife to loosen up rootbound plants by scoring the edges of the rootball (container plants only).
- Test fit the shrub in the hole and adjust the depth as necessary. Match the old soil level or soil line on the stem with your new ground level.
- Plant the shrub, spreading the roots out evenly. Don't leave them in a cluster or clump.
- Backfill the hole with the soil you removed. Pause part way and water well, then continue adding soil. Firm the soil

not tilted to one side.

- Form a slight lip of soil, about a foot in diameter, around the plant to hold water from running away, then water again.
- Mulch underneath to keep weeds down and keep the soil moist. Apply a 2-3 inch thick layer, but don't allow the mulch to contact the trunk(s). Keep it a finger width or two clear.



Credit: Iryna80

## GROWING

Keep your gooseberry bushes well-watered while they're young or if they're growing in containers. Established gooseberry bushes need very little watering, unless your climate is hot and dry.

At the end of each winter use a balanced or-

These bushes are scrappy, and too much fertilizer can cause problems.

Remove any weeds around the root area before topping up with a thick layer of organic matter such as garden compost or bark chippings.

Spread the mulch 4 to 6 inches thick around the bush and out to the drip line. Don't pile mulch up against the shrub's base.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

Prevent birds from stealing your gooseberries by covering bushes with netting (or, grow them inside a purpose-made fruit cage).

## Pruning Gooseberry Shrubs

sible, but it won't need much else once established.

Prune in late winter while the plants are still dormant.

- Remove any dead or broken branches first.
- Next, prune to open the center, removing twisted or competing branches.
- Suckers coming from the base can also be pruned.
- Finally, trim back last year's growth by about half. Locate your cuts immediately above a bud.

## Video Demo: How to Grow Gooseberries

Growing Gooseberries from Planting to Harvest



## ADVERTISEMENT

## Types

Some varieties are virtually thornless, and it's important to choose a variety that is resistance to disease, mildew and pests.

Here are several of the gooseberry varieties that grow in North America.

- 'Oregon Champion' produces medium-size to large yellow-green berries that work well for processing; canes are thornless; 3 to 5 feet tall; hardy in Zones 3 to 8; quite resistant to powdery mildew.
- 'Poorman' has dessert quality; it's very productive, with red-fruited, flavorful, large fruit and is the best variety for the home garden. It has been bred to be par-

thorns; 3 to 4 feet tall; resistant to powdery mildew.

- ‘Pixwell’ is sold most often; it’s very productive and hardy though fruit is of average quality and best if harvested slightly underripe; small to medium-size berries that are light green, maturing to a soft pink; 3- to 4-foot-tall bush; hardy in Zones 4 to 6; bears thorns which make it difficult to pick.

## HARVESTING

Be patient: First berries start ripening in the early summer of the plant’s second year; expect full fruit 3 to 5 years later.

- We harvest in mid-summer, though it depends on your climate. The easiest way to determine if gooseberries are ripe is to gently squeeze them. The fruits are soft, so handle them gently and wear thick gloves if your bush is of a thorny variety.
- To get the hang of it, start when they are still immature. The fruits will feel quite firm. As they ripen, they’ll feel softer, more like a grape. Varieties other than green will also start to change color.

ally lasts several weeks. Harvest dessert or

dual-purpose varieties in stages.

- For fresh eating—picking at the peak of ripeness—the gooseberries will separate easily from the stems. If you have to tug at it, leave it another day or two.
- The under-ripe fruits are ideal for cooking, and riper fruits will be sweeter and larger.
- Store freshly-picked gooseberries in the refrigerator; they should last about a week though best eaten right away like raspberries!

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



\$8.99

\$9.99

\$8.79

BUY  
NOW

BUY  
NOW

BUY  
NOW

## PESTS/DISEASES

protect your fruits if needed.

- [Scale insects](#)
- [White pine blister rust](#)
- [Powdery mildew](#)

## WIT AND WISDOM

- Gooseberry bushes are spiny and, without pruning, will likely become an impenetrable thicket. Keep up with annual pruning to make fruit harvest easier.
- Gooseberries are thorny or spiky bushes, which is one way to tell them apart from currants. Some newer varieties are nearly thornless if you'd like a little less challenge at harvest time.

## RECIPES

**GOOSEBERRY FOOL**

## COOKING NOTES

- If making preserves, harvest gooseberries before they are completely ripe—the natural pectin levels will be higher.
- Gooseberries make excellent wine.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

## MORE LIKE THIS



[How to Grow Currants: The Complete Guide](#)



[5 Flavorful Superfruits to Grow This Spring](#)



[How to Grow Elderberries: The Complete Guide](#)



[How to Grow Goji Berries: The Complete](#)



[How to Grow Pomegranates: The Complete](#)



[The 5 Fastest-Growing Fruit to Grow](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

## COMMENTS

[ADD A COMMENT](#)

**Esteban (not verified)** 8 months 3 weeks ago

My gooseberry bush leaves have been turning into a sickly darker green color. It's been really hot so I've been trying to keep them watered. The leaves will dry out and die over days.

ADVERTISEMENT

[REPLY](#)

**The Editors** 8 months 3 weeks ago

We're trying to understand what you're seeing. Gooseberry bush leaves are sup-

sunburn. This bush needs bright, indirect light. In terms of water, both overwatering and underwatering can lead to leaf drop. The top inch of soil should feel dry before you give it another drink.

**REPLY**

---

**Aimee (not verified)** 9 months 3 weeks ago

Please correct your article - Oregon Champion Gooseberries are NOT thornless. They are absolutely delicious, super prolific even in the first year, and far better at fighting off aphids than other varieties, but they are - like most gooseberries - hell to pick because of their 1/2" or longer thorns. Wear gloves!

**REPLY**

---

**devendramanisk... (not verified)** 10 months 3 weeks ago

you have not mentioned anything about star gooseberries and indian green gooseberries. can you throw some light on these plants too as they have multiple health benefits

**REPLY**

**Aimee (not verified)** 9 months 3 weeks

ago

Neither of those are true gooseberries  
(kind of like how a ground cherry is not  
related to the cherry family), which is why  
it's not in here. Gooseberries are mem-  
bers of the Ribes (currant) family, the two  
you mentioned are not. :)

**REPLY**

---

**Kristina (not verified)** 1 year 5 months ago

I thought I would indulge myself and plant a row of  
different kinds of gooseberries and one of currants  
-- about 18 bushes in all.

It turned out that the currant sawfly infestation is  
so bad every year that I have to pull all of the plants  
out. Since planting them in 2019 (or even earlier?), I  
have not been able to enjoy even one bowl of  
gooseberries. Pretty much every single berry has  
had a currant sawfly larva in it. Added protein, I  
know, but not very appetizing.

I had no idea that this could even be a problem. I  
feel terrible -- I waited too long for them to start  
producing, and then when I noticed the problem, I

putting row cover on them, kaolin, picking off the adorable green worms and feeding them to my neighbors' chickens... And all for naught.

But apparently I just have bad luck. When researching the matter, I read that someone here locally (I live on Puget Sound in Washington State) had such a bad infestation of currant sawflies that he had to rip out all his plants, but that just a couple of miles away his friend had no problem with his bushes.

I thought about giving away the bushes to someone who lives elsewhere, but wondered whether really it was safe, even if I get all the dirt off -- my master gardener friend confirmed my fear: she said it is best to destroy them, since the risk would be too great that I would spread the sawflies even farther.

I assume that my problem might have to do with the fact that I have native currants as well. In any case, I was surprised that the Almanac article didn't mention a word about the devastating currant sawflies!

I guess I could try to have just one currant bush, symbolically, to remind me of my dear Warsaw landlady's impressive row of red, black and white currants in her Grochów garden -- but unfortunately even trying to keep the sawflies away from

Best to save my sanity and grow some native, problem-free, delicious blackcaps. :-)

**REPLY**

**Aimee (not verified)** 9 months 3 weeks

ago

PS - Our gooseberries are in our 'fruit forest' undergrowth we planted, along with native red flowering currants, clove currants, and pink champagne currants, all which are doing well.

**REPLY**

**Aimee (not verified)** 9 months 3 weeks

ago

We live in Skagit Valley north of Puget Sound and I'd never had great luck with gooseberries in the past due to pests until I got the Oregon Champion variety over at Christianson's Nursery. Not only did it take our crazy cold winter this past year, it is massively prolific and I'm making a batch of jam with it and the blueberries coming off our bushes this year. Give this variety a try!

[REPLY](#)

# THE OLD FARMER'S STORE



Ben's Pure Maple Cream

\$13.95

[BUY NOW](#)

Baseball Cap - Bee Happy

\$23.95

[BUY NOW](#)

Rain Gauge Stake - Heron

\$45.99

[BUY NOW](#)

Bee Silk - Moisturizing Cream...

\$36.95

[BUY NOW](#)

## ADVERTISEMENT

**Our Brands**

[The Old Farmer's Almanac for Kids](#)  
[Yankee Magazine](#)  
[Family Tree Magazine](#)  
[NH Business Review](#)  
[New Hampshire Magazine](#)  
[Yankee Custom Marketing](#)

**Resources**

[About Us](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[Free Daily Newsletter](#)  
[Webcam](#)  
[Advertise with Us](#)  
[Media Relations](#)  
[Sell the Almanac](#)  
[Where to Buy](#)  
[Terms of Use](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)  
[Cookie List](#)  
[Do Not Sell or Share](#)  
[My Personal Information](#)

**Connect with Us**

©2025 [Yankee Publishing Inc.](#), An Employee-Owned Company  
1121 Main Street | P.O. Box 520 | Dublin, NH 03444