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How to Grow Currants: The Complete Guide



Botanical Name: *Ribes*

Plant Type: [Fruit](#)

Sun Exposure: [Part Sun](#)

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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Currants

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 14, 2024



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Discover how to grow juicy, health-boosting currants! Banned until recently in the United States, these popular berries are wonderful in cookies, crumbles, juices, and jams. Discover a whole new fruit to enjoy with our guide on how to plant and grow currants!

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About Currants

Currants might look like blueberries at first glance—small, round berries that grow on shrubs. Currants (*Ribes*) are thornless understory shrubs, growing in [USDA hardiness zones](#) 3 to 8. Some are cold-hardy to Zone 2. They can grow 3 to 6 feet wide and tall.

Currant bushes are easier to grow than most berries; they don't need special acidic soil like blueberries; they're thornless unlike their fellow gooseberries; they grow on grape-like clusters on stems so they are easy to harvest. And they are prolific! They are some hard-working berries.

Currant berries are incredibly healthy and high in Vitamin C. They come in multiple vari-

blackcurrants, and there's even a pink currant.

Currants Return to America

While European gardeners are familiar with blackcurrants and other currants, many North Americans have yet to discover the wonders of these berries. Why? In the U.S., currants were banned from being grown or sold for many years because of a disease called white pine blister rust, which threatened the forest industry. Currants served as an intermediary host for this disease. But while the effects on currants are minimal, the same can't be said for white pines, which will often die from the disease.

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states have now lifted it. Meanwhile, much work is going into breeding white pine blister rust-resistant trees. **However, some states still do not allow the growing of currants or require a permit to do so. Check state regulations for restrictions before planting.** If you're ordering from an online nursery, they will often list states that they can not ship to.



Read Next

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

PLANTING

When to Plant Currants

Autumn is perhaps the best time of year to

fore winter. You can also plant in early spring before growth emerges.

Purchase bare-root currants from a reliable nursery, selecting either one- or two-year-old vigorous stock. If you're on a budget, waiting till autumn means bare-root currants are available to buy, which are usually much cheaper.

Or, plant a container-grown currant at any time of the year; just avoid the very warmest months so you're not a slave to watering it.

Choosing and Preparing a Planting Site

Unlike most other fruit crops, currants tolerate partial shade and prefer a cool, moist growing area. After all, they are understory shrubs in the wild. They enjoy sloping ground and sheltered spots such as along the side of a building or a shady arbor.

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All currants like rich, well-drained soil that holds moisture well but doesn't get waterlogged. Incorporate organic matter (compost, peat, or manure) to improve the soil, particularly if it is somewhat sandy. Ensure good spacing and air circulation to avoid powdery mildew.

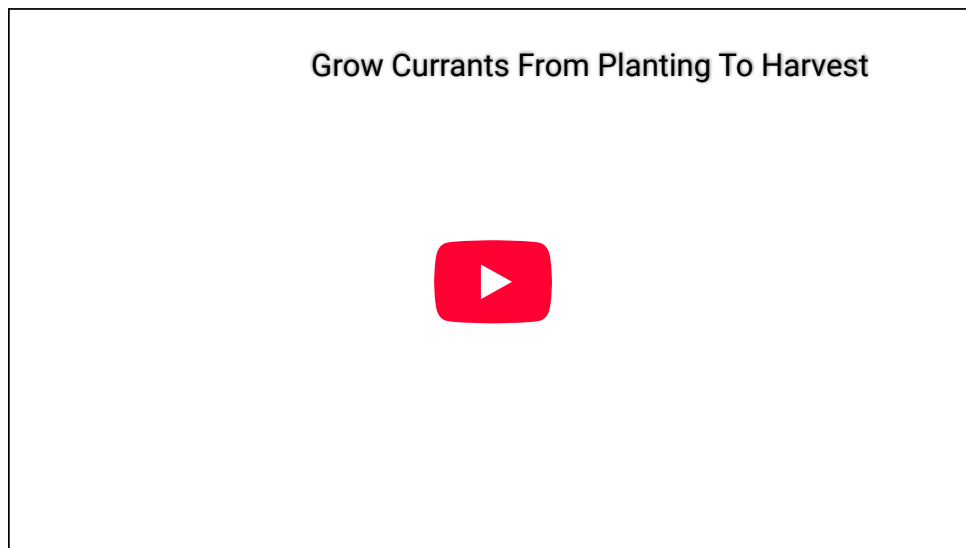
How to Plant Currants

1. Before planting, clear out the weeds. If you're a no-till or no-dig gardeners, you could just smother the area with cardboard then mulch on top, leaving gaps for planting or cutting holes in the cardboard to plant.
2. Work mature or compost into the soil before planting. Currants are heavy nitrogen feeders.
3. Remove damaged roots and head back the tops to 6 to 10 inches. Do not allow the root systems to dry out. Set plants as soon as possible in properly prepared soil.
4. Dig the planting hole. Sprinkle in some

5. Get the plant into position, set slightly deeper than they grew in the nursery.
6. Backfill the hole, firming the soil around the roots.
7. Water in.

As a general rule, plants should be spaced 3 to 5 feet apart in the row with 8 to 10 feet between rows.

You can also plant from a cutting that you've taken from another currant bush. See the video below.



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GROWING

How to Care for Currants

- Mulch to control weeds, retain moisture, and keep the soil cool.
- Every year, spread 2 to 3 inches of mulch around plants and replenish it yearly.
Suitable mulches include composted manure, compost, wood chips, or similar materials. Grass clippings make excellent mulch.
- Every spring, sprinkle organic fertilizer over the soil surface to keep nutrients topped up.
- Keep bushes well-watered, especially when young and getting established.

How to Prune Currants

Proper pruning will also help you to get the most from your currants. Do this in winter, cutting out any dead or diseased wood, as well as badly placed branches – for example branches that are likely to sag to the ground under the weight of fruit, or branches that

1. On blackcurrants you can completely remove up to a third of the oldest canes at a time – usually the thickest and darkest ones – to stimulate vigorous replacements, or to keep it even simpler, just cut out all of the canes that have just fruited.
2. For red and white currants, aim to encourage an open, bowl-like shape. Prune back new growth by a half and cut the side shoots coming off the main stems to two buds. You also want to keep the short stem, or ‘leg’, that the branches emerge from clear of any shoots.

Whatever you’re pruning, make sure all cuts are made just above a bud that faces out from the bush – this way you’ll get less growth directed into the bush and congesting it – a recipe for disease!

Red and white currants will also benefit from a midsummer prune. Simply cut back side shoots that have grown that season to around three to five leaves.

Types

Blackcurrants are the very easiest to grow.

The bushes prefer full sun but will tolerate a

rich berries for many years to come. Use them in pies, jams or refreshing cordials.

Red and white currants grown in a similar way as gooseberries, and it's helpful to think of them almost as the same plant. These bushes also prefer the sun but cope admirably with partial shade. Unlike blackcurrants, they can be trained as cordons (single stem), as standards—and they grow well in containers, too, making them the ideal choice for smaller gardens. White currants taste sweeter than red currants, which are perfect for cooking, making jams and jellies, and elevating just about any dessert.



HARVESTING

How to Harvest Currants

ting up a fruit cage to keep all of your prized pickings secure.

Pick them once they've taken up their final color. Currants are grouped in trusses called 'strigs'. You can pick off individual currants, but you'll find it easier to pick or cut off an entire strig in one go. The simplest way to get the berries off the stalk is to comb them off with a fork like this – so much easier!

How to Store Currants

Currants are precious jewels that won't last long. They'll store in the fridge for a few days, but like all berries, use them up as soon as you can. One of the real plus points of currants is that they are a breeze to freeze.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Aphids: Scout plantings for infestations. Use soapy water spray or Neem oil. Monitor early to avoid infestation. Use insecticidal soap and Neem oils. Spray well.

Powdery Mildew: Pruning and plant spacing that can help improve air circulation and reduce humidity. Sprays are most necessary during humid or wet weather in the spring. Apply when the first signs of powdery mildew are apparent and repeat as necessary.

Spider Mites: Introducing predatory mites may help. Avoid the use of pesticides, which will kill beneficial insects as well. Avoid excess nitrogen which can lead to higher mite populations.

Japanese Beetles: Remove the beetles by hand and put them in soapy water. Pick in the evening and early morning. Adults are generally easy to control with foliar sprays if caught early.

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San Jose Scale: Before new growth appears in the spring, prune off any infested canes. Destroy infested canes or dispose of them in the trash (not compost). Applications of dormant oils may help reduce infestations as well.

Currant Borer: Treat in June before larvae enter stems and when adults are present. Bt products are effective only on larvae.

White Pine Blister Rust: Plant resistant (immune) varieties whenever possible. Check with nursery supplier for resistance rating of varieties.

Leaf spot and Septoria leaf spot: Improve air circulation to ensure that leaves dry sufficiently by trellising and pruning out dead or weak canes. Avoid overhead irrigation and only irrigate in morning. Remove or cover fallen leaves. Apply fungicides before bloom,

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Botrytis and Fruit Rot: Choose a planting site that gets good air circulation and regularly prune off weak canes so that canes can dry sufficiently. Weed diligently around plants to increase airflow and harvest fruit before it becomes overripe and molds. Apply fungicides while the plant is in bloom and again during the harvest, if necessary.

Currant Cane Blight or Botryosphaeria

Canker (*Botryosphaeria ribis*): Young shoots with yellow foliage and wilting leaves are early signs of disease. Watch young shoots and mature canes for signs of the black cankers before budbreak in the late winter. Prune and destroy infected canes in spring.

WIT AND WISDOM

Currants are not only delicious but boost health with a high nutrient content. Vitamin C concentrations can be as high as 250 milligrams per 100 grams of juice, even after 6 months of storage!

COOKING NOTES

Their flavor is quite tart, so they're more often used in juices, jams, and jellies. Because currants can be frozen, they are also magnificent in smoothies or turned into fruit crumbles.

FRUIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)



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COMMENTS

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Esteban (not verified) 5 months 2 weeks ago

When you say I can plant in autumn, is this early autumn?

[REPLY](#)

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The Editors 5 months 2 weeks ago

Hi Esteban,

Yes, you want to plant in early fall when the soil is still warm from the summer

to acclimate before cold weather sets in
(depending on your location).

Since it is late in the year, you can also
plant in the spring once the threat of frost
has passed and before any new
growth begins.

Hope this helps!

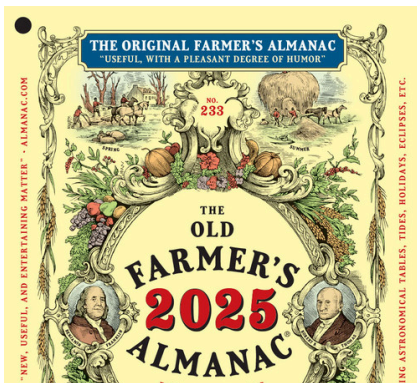
REPLY

Esteban (not verified) 2 years 2 months ago

How will they do over winter, inside a container?

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