

Bush Fruit

Bush fruits (currants and gooseberries) are excellent for cooking, jams, jellies and wine making. Because the bushes are very hardy, they can be grown over a wide range of climatic conditions.

LOCATION

Plant currants and gooseberry bushes in full sun to partial shade. They bloom very early in the spring and are thus susceptible to late spring frost injury -avoid planting in low lying "frost pockets".

SOIL

Although they will grow well under a wide range of conditions, they prefer well drained silt or clay soil. Bush fruits are heavy feeders so liberal amounts of mushroom manure should be worked into the soil before planting.

PLANTING DISTANCE

In the home garden, a minimum spacing of 1.5m (5') is recommended for red currants and gooseberries, while 1.8m to 2.1m (6' to 7') is suggested for black currants. However, slightly wider spacing may be preferred for ease of picking.

MULCHING

After planting, currants and gooseberries should be mulched to help the soil retain water and heat. The mulch used can be straw, compost or mushroom manure and should be spread 2.5cm to 5cm (1" to 2") deep around the plants. Bushes should be mulched twice a year: once during the spring and once in the fall. Mulch also helps to prevent weed growth.

FERTILIZING

Bushes must be strong and healthy to produce top yields of large berries. It is, therefore, important to maintain the bushes by feeding them regularly with manures and/or fertilizers. The actual rate of commercial fertilizer used will depend upon the soil type and the amount of manure used previously. Use 2 to 3 cupfuls of **GARDENWORKS™** All-purpose 6-8-6 Fertilizer per mature bush per year. Apply the fertilizer in a ring under the branches and work it into the soil with a cultivator.

PRUNING

Prune in the late winter or early spring before growth starts. Prune out everything except strong, upright growing canes. Black currants produce the best fruit on one year old wood, therefore, each spring all old wood and weak canes are removed leaving 6 to 9 strong new canes. Gooseberries and red currants produce fruit on spurs on 2 and 3 year old wood; therefore, wood older than 3 years should be removed. Each year, 2-4 good strong new canes should be retained; however, it is seldom desirable to keep more than a total of 8 or 9 canes per bush. Any long new canes can be shortened to promote side branching and fruit spur development.

INSECTS AND DISEASE

There are two main pests that attack currants and gooseberries - the Currant Fruit Fly (small white maggots in the fruit) and Powdery Mildew (whitish, powdery fungus growth on the leaves and fruit, especially severe on European cultivars of gooseberries). The fruit fly can be controlled by annual sprays immediately after flowering while mildew sprays should be applied during the growing season as required. Good air circulation can be of assistance in controlling fungal diseases.



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