

# Currant Planting Instructions

Currants grow best in cooler areas but can be grown farther south if planted in a slightly shaded location.

Currants come in three color varieties: black, red and white. They are not that different, but the black ones are more tart and are more commonly used for jams or cooked uses. Red currants are eaten fresh as well as cooked

## Location

Currants need plenty of air circulation and protection from the hot afternoon sun. A partially shaded location near a large tree or on the north side of a building or slope is ideal for currant plants. The plants can collapse or develop sunburn when the temperature rises above 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Planting on a slope increases air circulation and lowers the risk of powdery mildew in currant plants. Salty air or soil along the coast can burn the leaves.

## Soil Preparation

Currants thrive in rich, moist, well-drained soil with pH level of a 5.5 to 7.0. In hotter regions, a 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch will moderate the soil temperature and help the soil retain moisture. Grass clippings, straw and composted wood chips are good mulch materials.

## Fertilizer

Fertilize twice a season with 2 ounces of 10-10-10 for each foot of plant height; keep well-watered.

Currants are heavy nitrogen feeders and benefit from annual top dressing of manure; reduce the amount of fertilizer by half if you apply manure.

## Water

Currants need a consistent supply of water for their shallow roots, according to California Rare Fruit Growers. Immediately after planting, water the soil until the top 6 to 8 inches are soaked. From fruit set to harvest, currants need 1 inch of water every week. After the initial watering, a soaker hose or drip irrigation system can maintain an adequate water supply.

## Planting

In the spring, purchase container-grown currant plants from a reputable nursery. The plants should be one to two years old. Remove any damaged roots, prune the branches back to 6 to 10 inches, and place the root mass slightly deeper in the prepared soil than it was in the nursery container. Cover the roots with soil and press the soil to ensure contact with the roots. Currant plants should be 3 to 5 feet apart in rows that are 8 to 10 feet apart. Water thoroughly after planting.

## Pruning

Proper pruning improves sun light into the plant and maintains good air flow that will minimize disease.

- Prune established currant shrubs annually in mid-winter, before new growth appears, to encourage vigor and fruit production.

- During the first three years of growth, allow four or five canes to develop per year. Remove only weak or damaged wood.
- Beginning in the fourth year, prune out the oldest wood annually. Remove any weak new growth.
- A mature shrub should have 9 to 12 canes once pruning is completed.
- Fruit is produced on 1, 2, and 3-year-old wood. Try to keep three to four canes of each age.
- Always remove unwanted canes as close to the ground as possible.

### **Harvest**

The easiest way to tell when currants are ripe is to monitor the color and flavor of the fruits as they develop.

Promptly cooled berries will keep in the refrigerator for up to several weeks.

Delicious while fresh, right off the plant. Currants make excellent preserves and juice. You can use berries of all colors to make wine.