



Currant and Gooseberry Variety Review

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Last updated 4/4/12.

The following are descriptions of common varieties of currants and gooseberries suitable to New York conditions.

The regulation on growing ribes species in New York was revised in 2003. New York residents can now legally grow red currants, gooseberries and cultivars of black currants that are immune or resistant to white pine blister rust throughout New York State. In the near future, the establishment of fruiting currant districts will allow some regions to grow any of the black currant cultivars. Contact Steve McKay (sam44@cornell.edu), Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator in Hudson Valley, for further details on the establishment of fruiting districts. See also Cornell's white pine blister rust factsheet: <http://plantclinic.cornell.edu/FactSheets/wpineblister/wpineblister.htm>.

Black Currants:

Ben Alder is susceptible to white pine blister rust but resistance to mildew is very high. It is high yielding variety with superior juice quality. Growth habit is compact and upright and the fruit is well presented for machine harvesting. Bushes are vigorous though height varies according to climate but grows to about 4 feet tall. The plant flowers later than other black currant varieties. Harvest dates are late July to early August.

Ben Lomond is susceptible to white pine blister rust and though generally resistant to mildew, in some regions resistance has broken down. This mid-season variety is known for its frost tolerance during flowering, even ripening, high yields, large fruit, long hang time, very high Vitamin C content and excellent juice quality. The berries are large and firm. It forms a compact spreading bush that reaches about 4 ½ feet.

Ben Sarek is resistant to white pine blister rust. Its compact bush size, productivity, very large fruit and ease of hand harvest are its prized features; suitable for dessert quality fresh fruit. It flowers and ripens about 7 days earlier than Ben Lomond with high tolerance for frost and cold injury. It forms a compact bush of medium vigor which rarely exceeds one meter 3 feet in height. Ben Sarek may benefit from staking or wire trellis on each side of the row to support heavy fruit load.

Titania is immune to white pine blister rust and has good resistance to powdery mildew. Fruit size is large, fruit quality is good and has potential for dessert fruit market. The plant is very vigorous - reaching heights of 6 feet. Titania reaches full maturity in three seasons as opposed to four or five

with most other popular varieties. Because of its vigorous nature, Titania is more adaptable to growth in marginal soils and requires less fertilization than other varieties.

Red, White, and Pink Currants:

Jonkheer van Tets is a very popular early season variety with brilliant red fruit and excellent flavor. It is very productive but its growth habit is untidy and it is best grown as cordon. This variety is very susceptible to cane blight. Disease management must be in place from planting for this variety.

Red Lake is one of the most popular red varieties grown in North America, however, it is quite susceptible to mildew, and it does not have much tolerance to late spring frost. Fruit size is large and of good quality with high juice content. The fruit ripens in mid-season and produces high yields of firm fruit.

Rovada is a red cultivar that is very resistant to mildew and other leaf diseases. It produces a heavy crop of very large fruit on long full strigs. Rovada is the commercial red currant variety of preference. It is susceptible to cane blight however and will need management for that disease.

Tatran is a late-ripening red currant with exceptionally long strigs. It is very winter-hardy. Tatran is commercially acceptable as a late ripening variety with good potential for extending the u-pick season.

Blanka is very reliable and easy to grow. It has very heavy yields, good shelf life, very long clusters and some resistance to spring frost as it flowers mid-spring. It is very vigorous with a somewhat spreading growth habit. The fruit is large, opaque, beige in color.

Primus berries are translucent white with a yellow cast and good flavor. The growth habit is upright and vigorous. Yields are high but not as spectacular as Blanka.

Pink Champagne has beautiful translucent sweet pink fruit of good quality and flavor. It is best suited for u-pick, green market and home gardens as it is easy to grow. Pink Champagne is susceptible to berry "run-off" having incomplete strigs. For that reason it is considered a shy yielder. Flavor and fruit quality compensates for shy yield in the fresh fruit market. It has a vigorous upright growth habit and is resistant to leaf diseases.

Gooseberries:

Captivator is a cross of American and European cultivars and is resistant to powdery mildew. It has antique red teardrop-shaped fruit and is nearly thornless. It a late season variety with great flavor suitable for the fresh fruit market.

Hinnonmaki Red has outstanding flavor, good mildew resistance and is a favorite with home gardeners. Outer skin is tangy while the flesh is sweet. Very productive with dark red medium sized

fruit on upright plants. It is very adaptable to various growing systems. Fruit size for this variety is improved by growing on cordon.

Invicta produces a vigorous, rather spreading bush though with large and numerous spines. It is high yielding and mildew resistant. It produces pale green fruit which is a good choice for fresh market outlets. Yields are very heavy and fruit size is large. The fruit of this variety is susceptible to leaf spot; consistent disease management will be needed for this problem.

Tixia™ has large bright red fruit; elongated and quite smooth that ripens mid-season. In addition to the attractive fruit, Tixia one year shoots have few thorns and the thorns are relatively soft; usually as single thorns with very few, if any, on the upper part of shoots. Growth is medium to strong, upright.

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