SOLUTIONS IN THE LAND

CROP PROFILE

CURRANT

Ribes rubrum
Member of the Grossulariaceae family

History

The currant has been cultivated since before 1600 in regions around the Baltic Sea, including the Netherlands and Denmark. Bushes were transported to American settlements in the early 17th century, with most American varieties tracing their origins to Europe.

Climate Needs

Currants thrive in cool, moist, northern climates and adapt well to shaded environments. They are versatile plants that can tolerate dry conditions but perform best in wet areas with consistently moist soils.

Risk

Scouting requirements are higher due to pests.

Currant Description

Currants are deciduous shrubs native to temperate climates in the Northern Hemisphere and parts of South America. They are commonly found in the Rocky Mountains. These shrubs can be erect or spreading, with hairy or glandular stems that are free of spines. Currant leaves vary in shape, from roundish to triangular, while flowers grow in clusters in shades of green, white, yellow, pink, red, or purple.

Soil

Currants prefer rich, well-drained soils that retain moisture without becoming waterlogged. Ideal soil types include clay or silt, with a pH range of 6.2 to 6.5. If soils are sandy, adding compost, peat, or manure will help to improve water retention.

Seeding

Currants are propagated from 8–12-inch cuttings taken in autumn and planted in nurseries immediately. Cuttings are spaced 3 to 6 inches apart in spring, with only two buds exposed aboveground. The soil around the cuttings should be pressed firmly and watered lightly and frequently. Rooted cuttings are transplanted the following spring. Due to their shade tolerance, currants are often planted beneath grapevines or fruit trees like peaches, cherries, and pears.

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Highlights

Because currants are highly tolerant of shaded environments, they are an excellent choice for growing beneath fruit trees, taller shrubs, or other areas with limited sunlight. This adaptability allows gardeners and farmers to make the most of otherwise underutilized spaces.

Weed Control

Effective weed control begins before planting, with the elimination of perennial weeds. Once established, shallow cultivation, mulching, and consistent maintenance help suppress weeds and retain soil moisture. Grasses are particularly competitive and need regular attention.

Pest & Disease Managment

Certain pests like currant worms and stem girdlers can cause damage if unchecked. White-pine blister rust poses a notable risk, especially in areas near susceptible pine species. Vigilance and preventive measures are necessary to manage these threats.

Fertility

Young plants benefit from 1 to 2 tablespoons of high-nitrogen fertilizer, such as ammonium sulfate, ammonium nitrate, or urea, applied annually in spring. Older plants require 3 to 4 tablespoons of the same fertilizer. Aged manure can also be used as an alternative nitrogen source.

Harvest

Currants ripen in mid-July, turning vibrant in color with a slightly soft, juicy texture. They are best harvested by picking the entire fruit clusters rather than individual berries to prevent damage.

Cleaning & Storage

To clean currants, remove them gently from their stems and rinse them before use. They should be stored in a cool, dry place for freshness.

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Rating any crop's production opportunity or risk is subjective and depends on the region where the crop is to be raised. Genetic advancement for pathogen tolerance and adverse weather condition has been more significant for popular, high seed sales crops such as corn and soybeans. The below table lists some of the issues of producing specific crops and helps guide your process of selecting your cropping choice.

Average rating: 3.14

Issue	1	2	3	4	5
Seed availability				X	
Scouting requirements		X			
Drought tolerance		X			
Waterlogged soil tolerance				X	
Disease pressure		X			
Wildlife concerns			X		
Yield swings				X	
Harvest ability			X		
Field loss				X	
Market demand			X		
Soil regeneration			X		
Residue value			X		
Storability				X	
Benefit for following crop			X		

1- very low 2- low 3- average 4- moderately high 5- very high

Seed availability – Price, lead time, and required lot size are consideration for these issues
Scouting requirements – What frequency does someone need to look at the crop?
Drought tolerance – Rainfall patterns are requiring crops go longer between rainfall events.
Waterlogged soil tolerance – Rainfall events tend to produce higher volumes than historical averages.
Disease pressure – Plant stress has increased with the rise of daytime temperatures
Wildlife concerns – Deer, rabbits, voles, resident geese, and others can destroy fragile crops.
Yield swings – How predictable will the income be when this crop goes to market?
Harvest ability – Do we need plans B & C if adverse conditions affect the harvest?
Field loss – How much will be left in the field and can we monetize field loss?
Market demand – Does this crop have an elastic delivery window and are there timing penalties?
Profitability – Is there potential for higher margins needed for a shrinking land base?
Soil regeneration – Does this crop support the next crop?
Residue value – What remains after the target crop? Can we monetize the residue?
Storability – How long can we hold this crop? Will quality be challenging to maintain?

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