

Gooseberry Varieties for the Northwest & Intermountain West

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American versus European Gooseberries

There are two types of gooseberries, American and European. European types were developed primarily in England and have the advantage of large fruit size. European gooseberries, however, are very susceptible to a fungal disease called American Powdery Mildew. The disease affects the leaves, stems, and fruit. Infected fruit quickly becomes covered with gray to brown mold, rendering the berries inedible. Infected canes are often killed. Controlling this disease can be very difficult, as there are few fungicides registered for gooseberries. European gooseberries are not recommended for commercial production in Idaho. The cultivars listed below should perform reasonably well in home gardens. The cultivar Lepaa Red is quite resistant to powdery mildew, but has small fruit.

American gooseberries represent crosses between European cultivars and native gooseberry species. The American gooseberries have smaller fruit, but are much more resistant to powdery mildew. Given reasonable care, American Gooseberries are easy to grow and produce excellent fruit.

As with currants, Idaho no longer bans the growing or importation of gooseberries. Most gooseberry cultivars are reasonably resistant to blister rust disease, which is a minor problem on currants and gooseberries but very serious on white and other five-needled pines. With the development of rust-resistant white pines and improved forestry practices, the threat of blister rust has diminished for some tree species, but remains serious for non timber species, such as whitebark pine. If you are located in an area where five-needled pines are found, select blister rust immune or resistant currant and gooseberry cultivars.

American Gooseberries

Expected yield: 5 pounds per bush

Age to maturity: 4 to 5 years

Productive life: 15 to 20 years or more

Hardiness: -20 to -30 F

Optimal pH: 5.8 - 6.8

Spacing: 4 to 5 feet apart in rows 8 to 10 feet apart

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Captivator	1-2	M	G	Tear-drop-shaped, smooth fruit, greenish-red to red when ripe, with good flavor. Moderately vigorous and less spiny than some other varieties. One of the most promising gooseberries for commercial production in North America.
Downing	1-2	S-M	G	Fruit is smooth, green, tough-skinned, and of very good quality. Berries can be difficult to pick. While the flavor is good, the berries begin to decay soon after maturing, making it difficult to market fully ripened fresh fruit. The canes are above average in size and vigor, dense, and thorny. The most widely grown gooseberry in the U.S.during the early 1900s. A seedling of 'Houghton' and has some European ancestry. Bred in 1855 in New York. Better for home than commercial use.
Glennedale	1-2	S	F	Moderate quality berries are dark red to purple. Reportedly produces high yields in the northeastern United States. Canes are semi-erect, very thorny, tall, and vigorous . Released in 1932 in Glenn Dale, Maryland . [(<i>R. missouriense</i> x 'Red Warrington') x 'Triumph'] x 'Keepsake'. Tolerates bright sun and was bred for growers at extreme southern limit of gooseberry culture.

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Houghton	1-2	VS	F-G	The fruit is dull red, moderately firm, very sweet, and has a pleasing flavor. The canes are very large and vigorous, erect to spreading, and dense. One of the first named American cultivars, and very popular in North America during the early 1900s. Bred in 1833 in Massachusetts. Mildew resistance is its strong point. Better for home than commercial production.
Jahn's Prairie	2	L	G	A selection of <i>R. oxycanthoides</i> L. collected in 1984 from Alberta, Canada. Released in 1996 by the USDA in Oregon. A disease resistant, high quality dessert gooseberry. Fruit is globose, and red-pink. High yields. Habit is generally upright with some sprawling branches. Canes are thickly bristled with nodal spines. Growers in the northeastern United States report that the plants are somewhat slow to mature and develop high yields. Resistant to leaf spot, white pine blister rust, stem Botrytis, aphids, and saw-flies. Suitable for home use and commercial testing.
Oregon	1-2	S	F-G	Also known as 'Oregon Champion'. Berries are white to pale green, tart, and have thin, tough skins. Better suited to processing than fresh markets. Canes are large, vigorous, and erect to spreading. Originated in 1860 in Oregon as a cross between 'Crown Bob' and 'Houghton'.

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Pixwell	1-2	S-M	E	The fruit is pale green, ripening to pinkish-red and hangs in clusters below the canes, making it easier to pick than some other cultivars. Berries can develop a bitter taste when overripe. Canes are vigorous and erect to spreading. One of the most reliable gooseberries in North America, although fruit size, flavor, and overall fruit quality are marginal for fresh markets. This cultivar is best suited to processing. Developed by the North Dakota Experiment Station in 1932 as a cross between <i>Ribes missouriense</i> and 'Oregon Champion'.
Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Poorman	2	S	G	Red berries are sweet, aromatic, and have tough, smooth skins. Ripens over a long period beginning in midseason. Vigorous with fewer spines than some other cultivars. Canes are large, vigorous, erect to spreading, and bear relatively few spines. Reportedly originated as a cross between 'Houghton' and 'Downing' in Utah in 1888. One of the best gooseberries for North America where it remains popular today.
Sabine	2	M	P-F	Berries are pinkish in color and variable in size. Yields are relatively low, but fruit quality is good. Canes are vigorous, erect to somewhat spreading, and moderately spiny. Developed in Ontario, Canada in 1950. 'Spinefree' x 'Clark'.

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Sebastian	2	M	P-F	Berries are reddish and have good to very good quality. Yields are high. The vigorous, erect canes have few spines. Developed in Ontario, Canada.
Shefford	2	M	unknown	Berry flavor is good, although yields are, reportedly, low. Little evaluation data is available for the Northwest. Developed in Ontario, Canada.
Silvia	1-2	L	F-G	Also known as 'Sylvia'. The fruit ripens in midseason and is green tinged with dull red. Berries are subacid and have good to very good flavor. Yields are low. The canes are strong, and erect to spreading. Developed in Canada in the late 1890s.
Stanbridge	2	S	G	Fruits are yellowish-green. Yields are moderate. Canes are erect, vigorous, and develop few or no spines. Little evaluation data is available for the Northwest. Developed in Ontario, Canada.
Sutton				Little evaluation data is available for the Northwest. Developed in Ontario, Canada.
Welcome	1-2	M	F-G	The fruit is red. Canes are initially weak and spreading, but become more vigorous and erect as the plant matures. One of the most widely available gooseberries in the United States.
<p>Ripens: 1 = early summer, 2 = mid summer, 3 = late summer, 4 = early fall, 5 = late fall Fruit size: S = small, M = medium, L = large, VL = very large Powdery mildew resistance: P = poor, F = fair, G = good, E = excellent</p>				

European Gooseberry

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Chataqua	1-2	L	F	Sometimes confused with 'Whitesmith'. Fruit is smooth, green, tough skinned, flavorful, and has good quality. The canes are dense, spreading, and moderately erect. One of the most promising European gooseberry for North America .Origin unknown, but first described in the U.S. in 1876. Probably an English cultivar that was renamed.
Clark	1-2	L	P-F	The fruit is red. Canes are vigorous and spreading. Plants in Idaho tend to be small with low vigor. The pedigree is, apparently, unknown. A chance seedling discovered in Ontario, Canada and released as a cultivar in 1922.
Green Hansa		M-L	F	The green fruits are green and suitable for desert use. The canes are below average in size and vigor. From Germany.
Industry		M-L	P-F	Also known as 'Whinham's Industry'. The red fruit ripens early in the season, has a smooth to slightly hairy, moderately tough skin, and is of very good quality. The canes are vigorous and large for a European cultivar. Difficult to propagate. Originated in England and introduced into North America in about 1855. One of the most popular European gooseberries in North America during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Reportedly, 'Industry' remains a popular commercial cultivar in Holland.

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Invicta	1-2	L-VL	F	The tart, green to yellow fruits ripen early. Flavor ratings have been marginal in some trials and fruit quality has been reported to be variable. Very high-yielding. The spiny canes are below average in size and vigor. Moderately resistant to white pine blister rust. The foliage and fruit are, reportedly, susceptible to leaf spot. Other reports indicate particular susceptibility to imported currant worm. This cultivar has been used for commercial grower- and U-pick fresh and processing markets. Released in 1981 in England. ['Resistentia' x 'Whinham's Industry'] x 'Keepsake'.
Keepsake	1-2	S-M	F-G	Berries are green with a red blush, variable in size, with a thin, tough, fairly smooth skin. Fruit quality is good, but the variability in size limits its commercial value. Moderately vigorous canes. Developed in the early 1800s in England.
Lepaa Red	1-2	S	G-E	The red berries have good flavor. Canes are small, vigorous, dense, and productive. One of the most reliable gooseberries in northern Idaho and Oregon trials and has performed well in the northeastern United States. Although suited for processing because of the small berry size, the desirable flavor of the fresh fruit may make this cultivar a good choice for farmers markets. Developed in Finland.
May Duke	1	M-L	F	The berries are green, becoming dull red when ripe, pleasantly flavored, and have smooth, moderately tough skins. The canes are medium-sized, vigorous, dense, and erect. Brought to America in the early 1900s.

Cultivar	Ripens	Fruit Size	Powdery Mildew Resistance	Comments
Speedwell	1-2	M-L	F-G	The berries are nearly smooth, red, sweet, and have fair quality. The canes are moderately vigorous. Originated in England in the early 1800s.
Whitesmith	1	M-L	P	Sometimes confused with 'Chataqua'. The fruit is green to light yellow, with a smooth, tender skin and sweet, pleasant flavor. The canes are average to above average in size, erect to spreading, and productive. 'Whitesmith' is included in this list because in the early 1900s some growers considered it "to be the best of the English cultivars grown on this side of the Atlantic". Probably developed in England in the late 1700s. Reportedly enjoying a resurgence of popularity in England and Scotland.
<p>Ripens: 1 = early summer, 2 = mid summer, 3 = late summer, 4 = early fall, 5 = late fall Fruit size: S = small, M = medium, L = large, VL = very large Powdery mildew resistance: P = poor, F = fair, G = good, E = excellent</p>				