





Currants (Black, White, Red – *Ribes* spp.)

Type	Deciduous/ Evergreen	Height x Width (metres)	Spacing (metres)	Pollinator	Soil type	Sun	Moisture	Shelter	Plant	Harvest
	D	1.5 x 1.5	1.5	N				Y	Autumn	Midsummer

Site

- Like a cold winter with some frosts – but need protection from late spring frosts and wind.
- Need shade from hot afternoon sun – do well on the south side of fruit trees or buildings.
- Need soil that will hold moisture (not sandy), containing lots of organic matter. Tolerate heavier and wetter soils than most fruits, but not waterlogging.
- Mostly self-fertile, but Blackcurrants set more fruit if they're cross-pollinated by other varieties.

Training & pruning

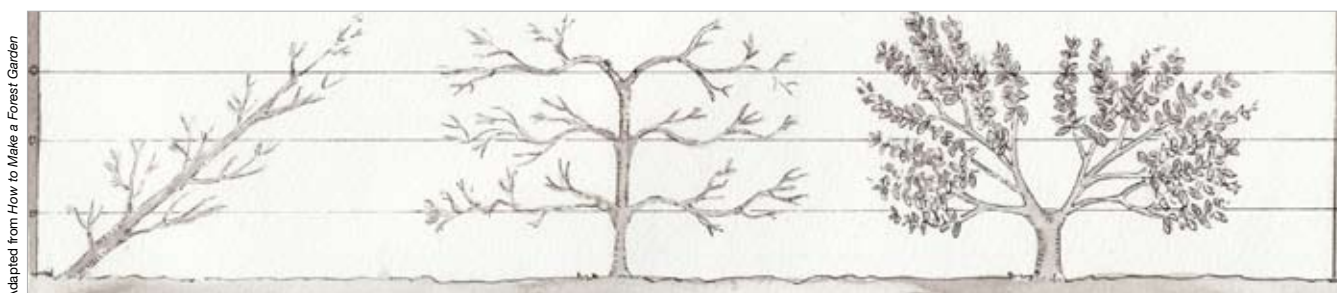
Blackcurrants

Train as a *vase*-shaped bush (plants 1.5m apart), or as a hedge (plants 1m apart):

Care

- Fairly easy to grow.
- Plant in autumn.
- Plant deeply, as the new growth shoots up from below the ground.
- At planting, cut the shoots back to 30cm so the roots can get established.
- The roots are very fine and close to the surface. Handweed carefully.
- Water regularly during the growing season, and keep the roots cool and moist with a thick mulch.
- Add potash (wood ash) during winter.
- Cover with bird netting when the fruits begin to ripen.
- Pollinated by bees and flies.
- At planting, remove any branches that are shorter than 15cm and any suckers.
- Choose eight to ten branches as the main framework, and shorten them by half to an upward-pointing bud. Allow enough space between the branches for airflow and sunlight.
- Once established, prune in winter, NOT after new growth has started in spring.
- Bears fruit on the previous season's shoots – cut old (dark-coloured) or weak wood back to ground level to stimulate the growth of new shoots.
- Keep eight to ten of the new shoots to be next year's fruiting branches, and cut the rest to ground level.
- If necessary, renew the bush every third year by cutting all the shoots to ground level.

Cordon, espalier and fan shapes



Adapted from How to Make a Forest Garden



White/Redcurrants

Plant 2m apart to train as *vase*-shaped bushes, *espalier* or *fan* (see diagram), or 45cm apart to train as a *cordon* – wires about 60cm apart.

- At planting, shorten the main leader to half its length and lightly tie it to a piece of cane that will support it up to the first wire.
- Remove any branches that are shorter than 10cm, and any suckers.
- Trim all the laterals back to a bud at about 2.5cm.
- Once established, prune in summer.
- Fruit forms on older wood, so shorten the main stems to force the growth of lateral branches. These will last for about 3 years, so keep a balance of younger and older canes each year e.g.:

Year 1: Cut to ground level all except two or three stems.

Years 2 & 3: Cut back all except two or three stems of that year's growth.

Year 4 onwards: Cut out the oldest stems to make way for new growth, and shorten any extra-long stems.

Harvest

- Takes 2–3 years to bear fruit.
- Ripens in midsummer over several weeks. If protected from birds, will last for several weeks on the bush.
- Pick (when dry) in whole clusters.
- Eat fresh, or bottle, freeze, cook for dessert, or make into jam.
- Redcurrants are quite tart, most often used for juice, jellies and purees.

Health

- Rich in vitamin C.

Recommended varieties

Blackcurrant: Magnus, Tai Tahi, Ben Mapua

Redcurrant: Myra McKee, Gloriade de Versailles

Whitecurrant: White

Plants for free

Easy to propagate with cuttings, taken in autumn after the leaves have fallen.

- Cut healthy stems from the current season's growth.
- Get them into pots of sandy soil as soon as possible after cutting, and keep them moist in the shade for 1 year, planting out the following autumn.



Blackcurrants

- Take cuttings 20–30cm long. Leave all the buds on the stem, but remove all the leaves.
- Pot up with two buds showing.

White/Redcurrants

- Cuttings 30–38cm long. Remove all but the top four or five buds, and all the leaves.
- Pot up with the buds showing.

