



Cooperative Extension Service

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58105

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COOPERATING



NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 1983

Circular H-530 (Revised)



MAY 16 1983
SERIALS DEPT.
LIBRARY

Currants-Gooseberries-Grapes

NEAL HOLLAND
Professor of Horticulture
Agricultural Experiment Station

ROBERT G. ASKEW
Extension Horticulturist

CURRENTS AND GOOSEBERRIES are two hardy fruits that require only a little space and minimum care to perform well in North Dakota gardens. All currant and gooseberry varieties available on the market are self fruitful so only one variety of each is needed to produce fruit. A well grown currant bush can be expected to yield up to 3 quarts of fruit. A vigorous gooseberry bush can produce approximately 6 quarts of fruit.

VARIETIES

Currants: Red Lake — red color, good quality, jelly.

Gooseberries: Pixwell — large fruit, high quality.
Welcome — large fruit, high quality.

CULTURE — Currants and gooseberries like a cool location. A north slope where the hot winds of summer do not strike the planting is very desirable. The normal garden spacing for currants is 4 x 6 feet. Spacing for gooseberries should be 6 x 8 feet or 8 x 8 feet. Mature plants tend to become spreading in habit and closer spacing makes picking difficult. Clean cultivation is recommended.

PRUNING — Currants usually produce good crops the second or third year after planting. After the fourth year, berries become smaller and fewer berries per bunch are produced. This decline in fruit bearing is usually due to lack of pruning. During the pruning process, save upright canes whenever possible, and remove canes that have a tendency to sprawl on the ground.

The best fruit and the largest bunches are borne on canes two and three years old. A well pruned bush should have from nine to 12 canes arising from the ground. One-third of these canes should be one year old, one-third two years old, and one-third three years old. Once a currant bush is trained into a shrub having nine to 12 canes, annual pruning is a small task. From then on it is only necessary to remove canes older than three years and to reduce the number of one-year-old canes to the three or four necessary to replace the old ones removed. Protect ripening currants from loss by covering bushes with bird netting.

Gooseberries are usually pruned more severely than currants. Fewer canes are left and the remain-



Figure 1. Pruning currants, before and after.



Figure 2. Pruning gooseberries, before and after.

ing canes are thinned out at the tips. This thinning process keeps the plants young and vigorous and makes it easier to harvest the fruit. Remove canes that sprawl on the soil surface, since they tend to root, making it difficult to cultivate.

Currants and gooseberries are propagated by mounding soil around the base of the canes in the spring. Roots will form on these "mounded" canes during the summer. These rooted divisions may be cut from the old plant and set out the following spring. The tops of the new plants should be cut back severely at planting time before growth begins. For control of currant worms and currant fruit flies, see circular E-299 Revised, "Fruit Insect and Disease Control Guide."

Wild grapes have grown in wooded areas along North Dakota streams for hundreds of years. These wild grapes can be used for juice and jelly.

Our native grapes vary in quality and productivity. Many wild plants do not set fruit because they are imperfect flowered or male vines. This is why grape seedlings transplanted from the wild often fail to produce fruit. Cuttings taken from a fruiting plant are a more reliable way to get producing plants started.

VARIETIES

Beta — Fruit bluish black, small, sour, good for jelly and juice; hardy.

Valiant — Very hardy, fruit blue, small, earlier than Beta with better quality.

Fredonia — Black, good size, sweet, high quality, late, cover vines for winter, less hardy (see winter production).

Edelweiss — White, dessert quality grape introduced by U. of Minn. Less hardy and requires winter covering.

Swenson's Red — Red table grape of good quality introduced by U. of Minn. Less hardy and requires winter covering.

Concord — Lacks hardiness, **too late** for North Dakota.

Birds are fond of ripe grapes. Use ordinary paper bags to protect the clusters. Pull the bag up over the bunch and fasten around the stem with wrapping cord, wire, pin, or twistem.

CULTURE — Plants sold by nurserymen are one- or two-year-old plants. Spring planting is desirable. Prune back at planting time to only two or three buds. Space grape vines 8 feet apart in the row and the rows 8 to 10 feet apart if more than one row is installed.

Plant the grape arbor in a well protected site. Clean cultivation is recommended. A trellis with the

posts set 8 to 12 feet apart and with two or three wires is the most commonly used. Locate the lowest wire 18 to 24 inches above the ground and the other wires about 15 inches apart. During the first season, the vines should grow enough to reach the lower wire. The second season cut the vine just above the lower wire and tie with soft twine.

PRUNING grapes annually is very important. Grapes left unpruned yield poorly with small sized berries and become a tangle of vines. Beginners seldom prune grape vines severely enough. Grapes are produced on the current season's growth, which in turn comes from wood of the previous season's growth.

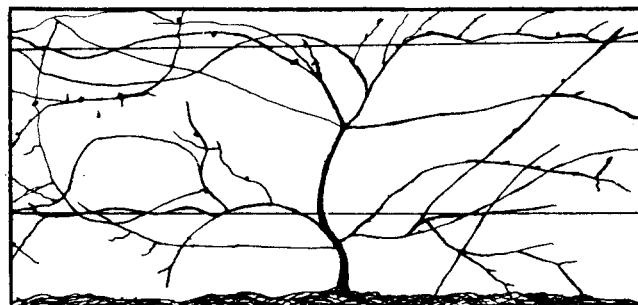


Figure 3. A thrifty young grape vine in need of pruning.

The most common method of pruning grapes is the "four cane kniffin" system (see Fig. 4). Each of the four canes left should have from 10 to 15 buds. This will make a total of 40 to 60 buds. Each bud may produce a sprout that will bear up to three bunches of grapes.

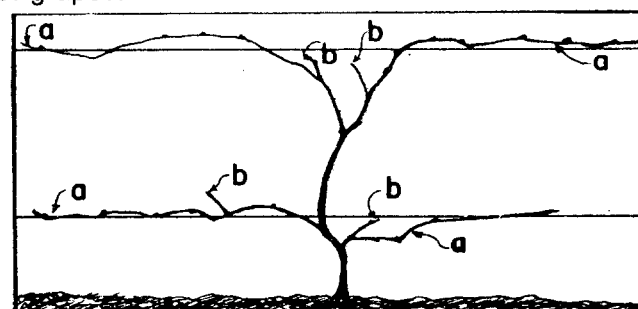


Figure 4. The vine in Figure 3, after having been pruned to four canes. (A) Fruiting canes, (B) Short spurs to provide renewal canes the following season.

A thorough job of pruning removes a great deal of wood. The hardy varieties left on the trellis over winter are usually pruned in the early spring before any growth occurs. Grapes may bleed profusely when pruned in early spring. This bleeding may look serious but is not harmful.

Fall pruning may be necessary if the vines are to be given winter protection. **To provide winter protection lay the canes on the ground and cover with 6 to 12 inches of soil.** Vines covered in this manner are taken up and tied on the trellis as soon as the soil thaws in the spring.