RED CURRANT

Ribes sativum (Saxifragaceaa)

Fast facts:

Number of Growers:	10
Acres in Washington:	100
Production per acre:	4.5 tons
Value per acre:	$3330

Description Of crop:

Currants grown in the U.S. are mainly red or black, with a few white. Only red currants are commercially produced in Washington. Red currant bushes are small weather-hardy shrubs that reach five feet in height and are typically propagated by hardwood cuttings. Unlike many berries, the stems are nearly thornless. The fruits are produced on racemes resulting in loose clusters of nearly a dozen or more fruits. The fruits have a thin, smooth skin. Established currant plants start growing in February and continue through July. Growers will typically prune mid-February to mid-March to remove older wood and encourage new growth. Bees are introduced to the field for pollination in early April. Plants can be kept in production for 12 to 16 years. Berries are ready for harvest when the fruit reaches 12 brix usually in late June-mid July. The largest commercial use of currants is for juice and jelly production. Red currants are very high in Vitamin C. These berries are machine harvested and when used in processing go directly from the field to be frozen. A small amount is sold on the fresh market. Harvesting machines are typically adapted from grape harvesters. Berry processing plants and machinery are established in western Washington, and this technology may be adapted readily to currant culture and processing. The challenges to be met are dealing with the need to process a product that may have a narrow, limited market, and finding a wholesale market that is profitable. Mechanized picking is needed to reduce labor costs. Also, competition from other regions where currants grow well and market structure is already established could be problematic.

Key pests:

The currant borer and the currant stem girdler are the most significant pests of red currants. The currant fruit fly (known also as the gooseberry maggot), the imported currantworm, and the currant aphid also are insect pests of currants. Mice and birds can also damage a red currant stand. Annual grasses are the most troublesome weeds in currants. Other weed pests are mallow and field bindweed. Diseases of currants are powdery mildew, which appears as a white powdery growth on leaves and often stunts plant growth. Botrytis in storage is also a pest issue.

Key pesticides:

Because the currant cane borer is controlled with limited success by insecticides, cutting and burning infested canes is more frequently the means of control. Pheromone-based mating disruption of both the currant stem girdler and currant borer is used. Danitol 2.4 EC is used as chemical controls for both the borer and stem girdler. Growers can bait for mice with zinc phosphide products. Devrinol and Roundup are used for weed control and Rally 40W is used for powdery mildew control.

Critical pest issues:

Growers need an effective annual grass specific herbicide. Mechanical applications of herbicides can present problems as the fruit matures. When the fruit gains weight and droops it can be broken off by tractors or sprayers**.** Pruning can eliminate much of the older wood habitat that favors the currant borer. Pheromone dispensers have been used for a suppression effect on populations of cane borer. Sticky traps have been used for control of the currant stem borer. Growers should avoid excessive use of broad-spectrum insecticides, which can destroy the predators of spider mites. The cultivar "Wilder"is chosen most frequently because of its resistance powdery mildew.

Expert contacts:

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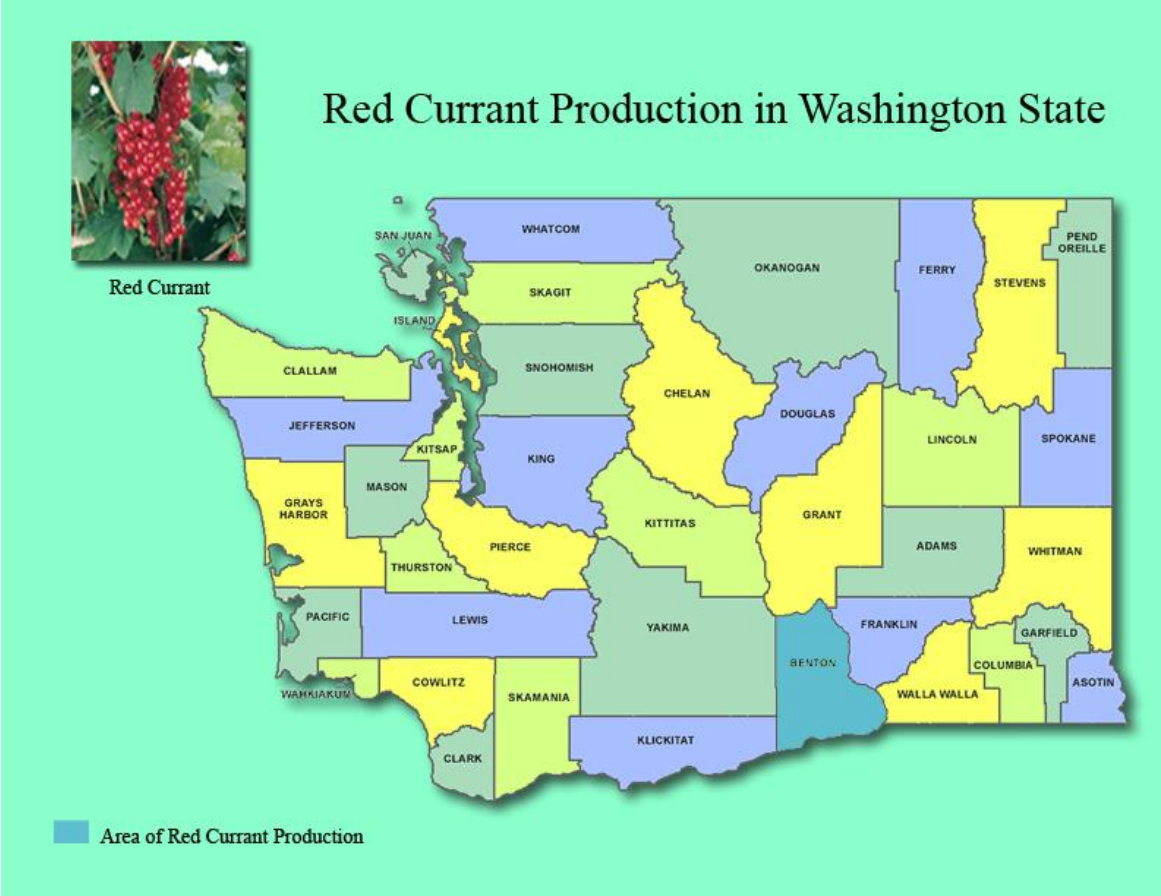
Location
of production: Washington production is centered in Benton County



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