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## Red-flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)

### Gooseberry Family

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#### *Why Choose It?*

At the bleak tail-end of winter, red-flowering currant's flurry of blossoms act like horticultural Prozac. Gracefully drooping clusters of crimson flowers adorn shrubs that have yet to leaf out. The blooms reassure us that yes, spring is nearly here. The rest of the year the shrub is a good garden citizen, greening up nicely with maple-like leaves, making berries for the birds, and turning gently yellow in the fall—while quietly awaiting its return to top billing.



Photo: Ben Legler

#### *In the Garden*

Happy in sun or shade, this freely branching shrub brightens up a mixed border or woodland. Early migrating hummingbirds seek out its flower nectar. Later on, robins, towhees, and sparrows enjoy the whitish berries, although humans find them insipid.

#### *The Facts*

Red-flowering currant grows upright, 3 to 9 feet tall. If you water it for the first two summers after planting, it will do fine through our dry summers. Several cultivars are available, including ones with pure white flowers.

#### *Where to See It*

Red-flowering currant grows in open woods, on cliffs, and along roadsides in western Washington. It has been planted at many native plant demonstration gardens and restoration projects.

## *And, hey, what was it worth in the 19th century?*

When David Douglas, the mercurial and dauntless Northwest plant explorer, sent seeds of red-flowering currant to London, the plant became all the rage. The Royal Horticultural Society recouped its investment in Douglas's expedition from this plant introduction alone.



Photo: Tim Hagan

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

[www.wnps.org](http://www.wnps.org)

206-527-3210 or 1-888-288-8022



Washington Native Plant Society

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## *Native Plant Spotlights*

Adapted from writing by Sarah Gage

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