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Ribes rubrum

[Synonyms : *Ribes domesticum*, *Ribes rubrum* var. *hortense*, *Ribes rubrum* var. *scandicum*, *Ribes rubrum* var. *sylvestre*, *Ribes sativum*, *Ribes scandicum*, *Ribes spicatum*, *Ribes sylvestre*, *Ribes vulgare*, *Ribes vulgare* var. *hortense*, *Ribes vulgare* var. *sylvestre*]

RED CURRANT is a deciduous shrub. Native to northern Europe (possibly excluding Britain) it has tiny yellowish-green or greenish-brown flowers.

It is also known as *Aalbes* (Dutch), *Aka-suguri* (Japanese), Common currant, Cultivated currant, Currant, *Dak* (Punjabi), Garden currant, Garnetberry, *Gradiles* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Gazel*, *Groseille* (French), *Groseillier à grappes* (French), *Groseillier commun* (French), *Groseillier rouge* (French), *Groselheira vermelha* (Portuguese), *Grosellero rojo* (Spanish), *Johannisbeere* (German), *Meruzalka červená* (Czech), *Meruzalka zahradní* (Czech), Northern red currant, *Punaherukka* (Finnish), Raisin tree, Red garden currant, Repts, *Rhyfon Coch* (Welsh), *Ribes vulgare* (Italian), *Ríbezl'a* (Slovak), *Ribo ruĝa* (Esperanto), Ribs, Risp, Rizzles, *Röda vinbär* (Swedish), *Rote Johannisbeere* (German), *Rouâges gradilliers* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Russles, *Rybíz červený* (Czech), *Trädgårdsvinbär* (Swedish), *Vita vinbär* (Swedish), White currant, and Wineberry; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of 'you please all'.

The flowers are pollinated by bees and wasps.

Warning – the fruit can cause indigestion.

Unless red currant plants are of a variety that does not host the blister rust fungus they are prohibited in States in the United States where white pine (*Pinus strobus*) is a commercial timber tree.

Rubrum is derived from Latin *ruber* (red) with reference to the colour of the fruit.

In the Middle Ages the French were introduced to the red currant from Scandinavia, and later these became a favourite ingredient in the Parisian coffee houses. A drink made from the sweetened juice superseded syrup of almonds (*Prunus dulcis* var. *dulcis*) and these pleasantly-acid tasting, shiny translucent red (occasionally white, yellowish-white or pink) berries have also been used (and still are today) to make red currant wine.

Red currant is thought to have been introduced to North America by the early European settlers probably in the 16th Century. Records show that the Chippewa North American tribe ate the fruit both fresh and dried. Some of the tribe also found the root and bark of medicinal value.

For birds and small mammals red currants present an especial delicacy. Unprotected in the wild this means that bushes are stripped of their fruit very quickly.

The leaves yield a yellow dye, and a black dye can be obtained from the fruit.

The fruit provide an ingredient today for the cosmetics industry, apart from obviously the food industry as well.

Medicinally, red currant jelly was once favoured for easing the pain of burns (and at the same time preventing the formation of a blister).