

PLANTS FOR THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN



Sierra Currant

(Ribes nevadense)

USES OF SIERRA CURRANT

Plant sierra currant as a backdrop for a perennial garden or to create a screen. The edible berries serve as a food source for birds and are valued for use in preserves. This native plant is easy to grow and a beautiful addition to any yard.

DESCRIPTION AND GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS

Sierra currant is a fast-growing multi-stemmed perennial shrub. It is deciduous, open and somewhat sprawling. Sierra currant is found in moist places and along streams in the mountains of southern Oregon, Nevada, and California.

Sierra currant thrives in the well-drained soils of the Tahoe Basin. The bright green, rounded leaves have three to five rounded teeth and grow on slender stems. Sierra currant is typically the first shrub to leaf out in the spring and the last to lose its vibrant green leaves in the fall. Flowers have deep red to rose petals that form drooping clusters. The flowers smell faintly sweet and bloom from May to July. Waxy blue-black, edible berries form in summer.

ESTABLISHMENT AND CARE

Plant sierra currant after the danger of frost has passed, which in the Tahoe Basin is typically mid-June. Space plants four to six feet apart in a lightly shaded area. Avoid planting in compacted or soggy soils. Choose a partly sunny place with moist, well-drained soil.

If the soil in the container is dry, soak it and let it drain overnight before planting. Carefully remove the plant from the container so as not to break the root ball. Dig a hole that is twice as wide as and six inches deeper than the container. When the native soil is rich in humus (organic material), mix a small amount of compost or slow release organic fertilizer in the base of the hole to help the roots become established. If the soil is poor in organic material, pre-mix the backfill soil with 50% native soil and 50% stable compost. When planting with compost, additional fertilizer is not needed.

Plant at the same depth as the container, and make sure the root crown is level with the surrounding soil surface. The roots require fourteen inches of soil. Tamp the soil at the base of the planting hole to keep the plant from settling after the planting depth has been set. Backfill the hole half way with soil and then fill with water. The water



will help settle and firm the soil around roots, eliminating air spaces and providing good root to soil contact. After the water has drained, finish backfilling the hole such that the upper level of back filled soil is even with the soil surface. When completed, the root crown should be level with the solid soil surface.

(continued on back)

For more information contact your local conservation district:

In California:

Tahoe Resource Conservation District
530.543.1501 ext. 113
info@tahoercd.org

In Nevada:

Nevada Tahoe Conservation District
775.586.1610 ext. 28
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PLANTS FOR THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN



Form a shallow watering basin around the plant by building a ridge of soil around the edge of the hole. This will contain the water and allow for a deeper penetration of the water.

To retain moisture, add a two inch layer of mulch (wood chips or shredded bark) around each plant and again in spring when the ground thaws. Keep mulch slightly away from the base of the plants to avoid rot. During the first two years, it is important to consistently water to keep the soil evenly moist from spring until the soil freezes in fall.



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