

Scientific Name: *Ribes lacustre* (Pers.) Poir.

Family: *Rosaceae*

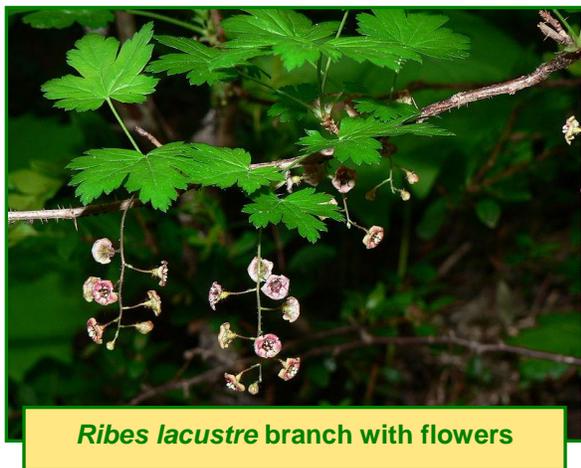
Common Names: bristly black currant, prickly currant, swamp currant

Plant Description

Erect to spreading shrub, 30 to 150 cm tall; branches are bristly, often with 1 to 3 spines up to 1 cm long at nodes; older bark whitish grey; leaves are somewhat maple-like, 3 to 4 cm across, 3- to 5-lobed, squared to slightly heart-shaped at the base, usually has gland-tipped hairs below; edges irregularly round-toothed; flowers 1 to 3 drooping clusters; greenish yellow to whitish, bell-shaped at the base, usually has gland-tipped hairs below, edges are irregularly toothed (Royer and Dickinson 2007).

Fruit: Smooth berries, reddish to bluish purple, 10 to 15 cm across; edible (Royer and Dickinson 2007).

Seed: Seed is reddish, flat, oblong to tear drop shaped approximately 2.5 x 1.5 mm.



Ribes lacustre branch with flowers

Habitat and Distribution

Open woods and exposed rocky sites (Johnson et al. 1995).

Seral Stage: Is found in all stages of development (Carey 1995).

Soil: Mesic to subhydric regimes; medium to rich nutrients; pH 5.9 to 7.8 (Beckingham and Archibald 1996, USDA NRCS n.d.).

Distribution: Alaska, Yukon, southwestern District of Mackenzie to James Bay, Newfoundland, south to California, Utah, Colorado, South Dakota, Michigan, Pennsylvania (Moss 1983).

Phenology

Flowers from April to July with fruit ripening August (Young and Young 1992).

Pollination

Wind and insect pollinated (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Dispersal

Birds are the main agents of seed dispersal; tests show that some *Ribes* seeds germinate better after passing through certain bird species (CYSIP: Botany n.d.).

Genetics

2n=16 (Moss 1983).

Seed Processing

Collection: Berries should be picked as soon as they are ripe to avoid losses of seed by birds and other wildlife (Young and Young 1992).

Seed Weight: 0.88 g/1,000 seeds (Young and Young 1992).

0.96 g/1,000 seeds (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew 2008).

Harvest Dates: End of July to August (Young and Young 1992).

Cleaning: Maceration and washing are used to separate seed from the pulp. A kitchen blender may



be used for small seed lots (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Storage Behaviour: Likely orthodox; seed should be dried to low relative humidity prior to cold storage (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew 2008).

Storage: Store in sealed containers with a low moisture content; temperature is not important (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Longevity: *Ribes* spp. have been reported to remain viable up to 17 years (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Propagation

Natural Regeneration: Mainly by seed (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Germination: 79% germination was reported for *Ribes lacustre* in test conditions (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Germination is epigeal (Young and Young 1992).

Pre-treatment: Cold stratification 0 to 5°C for 90 days (Bonner and Karrfalt 2008).

Seed Rate: Plant between 3,162 plants/ha and 12,651 plants/ha (USDA NRCS n.d.).

Vegetative Propagation: Hardwood and semi-hardwood cuttings can be rooted (Dave's Garden n.d.).



Aboriginal/Food Uses

Food: Can be eaten fresh or made into jam (Marles et al. 2000). Spines can be singed off leaves and stems

and then combined with bark to make a tea (called catnip tea)(Turner 1997).

Medicinal: Stem tea can be drunk as a treatment for diarrhoea and colds, and leaf tea was drunk to prevent miscarriages (Marles et al. 2000).

Wildlife/Forage Usage

Wildlife: Berries eaten by bears, birds and small rodents (Tannas 1997).

Livestock: Poor browse for livestock (Tannas 1997).

Grazing Response: Increaser (Tannas 1997).

Reclamation Potential

Could be used to prevent erosion and stabilize slopes (Tannas 1997).

Germinates from seed bank after fire (Hamilton 2006)

Commercial Resources

Availability: Very limited availability in Alberta (ANPC 2010), seed should be collected from native populations.

Seeds have been collected by the Oil Sands Vegetation Cooperative for use in the Athabasca oil sands region.

Cultivars: No literature found.

Notes

Ribes lacustre is listed as 84% intact (less occurrences than expected) in the Alberta oil sands region (Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute 2014).

Distinguishable from other *Ribes* spp. by persistent prickles on the stem and its bristly fruit (Borealforest.org n.d.).

Bristles may cause an allergic reaction in some sensitive people (Wilkinson 1990).

Photo Credits

Photo 1: Walter Siegmund @ Wikipedia commons 2011.

Photo 2: Steve Hurst @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database 2011.



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