

Golden Currant

Ribes aureum Pursh

Taxonomic Classification

Domain: *Eukaryotes*

Kingdom: *Plantae*

Subkingdom: *Tracheobionta*

Super Division: *Spermatophyta*

Division: *Magnoliophyta*

Class: *Magnoliopsida*

Subclass: *Roidae*

Order: *Rosales*

Family: *Grossulariaceae*

Genus: *Ribes*

Species: *Ribes aureum* [1]



Botanical Description

Shrub, 1-3 meters tall. Branchlets glabrous (without hairs) and without thorns. Petioles 0.5-2.5 (-3) cm long. Leaf blades strongly 3-lobed, lobes entire or crenate to lobed, glabrous, up to 4.7 cm long and to 6.7 cm wide. Flowers in clusters, sometimes as low as 3, but mostly 6-9 flowers per cluster; bracts 3-12 mm long, entire; free hypanthium, cylindric, yellow or orange, becoming reddish with age; sepals 4-6 mm long, yellow; petals 2 mm long, yellow, cream, or reddish; stamens subequal to the petals, anthers longer than the filaments; styles united to near the apex. Berries 8-12 mm long, black, purplish, red, orange, or commonly translucent-golden, glabrous, and tipped with remaining style. [5]

Identification Tips

Ribes aureum can be mistaken for *R. odoratum*, which is more common in the Eastern United States and Canada but also cultivated and sometimes found here; *R. aureum* is more prevalent in the West naturally. The sepals of *R. odoratum* are less than half the length of the free hypanthium, and *R. aureum* sepals are not [5].

Fun Fact!

The golden currant is the most palatable of the currant species found in Utah [5]. The amber colored berries are a favorite of birds and small mammals alike.



Diversity in berry color [6]



Leaf and diversity in berry color [7]

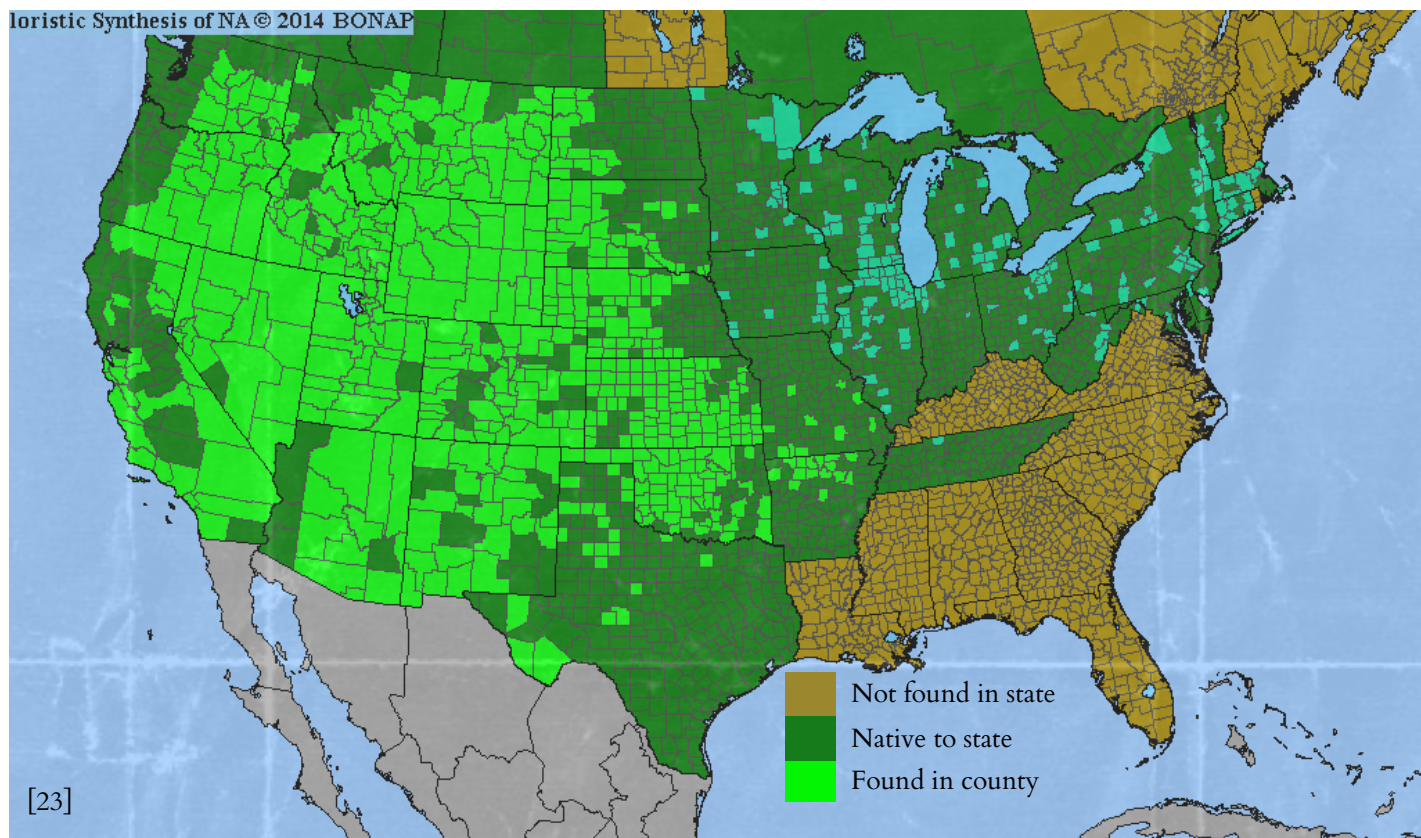


Diversity in berry color [8]

Ethnobotanical and Other Uses

The fruits are edible and a source of food for many wildlife species such as chipmunks, song birds, and other native little creatures [1]. Indigenous tribes such as the Blackfoot [9], Cheyenne [10], Gosiute (of Utah) [11], Klamath [12], Okanagan-Colville [13], Paiute [14], Ute (of Utah) [15], Yavapai [16], Comanche [17], Kiowa [18], and Lakota [19] all found the fruit to be useful as a raw food, but also an ingredient in porridge, jellies, and cakes. As many of the tribes that ate the fruit raw also dried the berries for winter or later use. Also known as Buffalo currant, the Plains Indians mixed raw or dried berries with dried buffalo or deer meat to make pemmican. The Paiute [20] and Shoshoni [21] tribes also used pounded up pieces of the inner bark to put on sores and would be eaten to aid in swelling of the legs. Kiowa tribes applied parts of the plant to aid in healing snake bites [18]. The Lakota tribes would use the branches to make arrows for hunting [22]. The berry color has been used to color clay pots as well [1].

Habitat Range



Conservation Status

Ribes aureum doesn't have a conservation status for the state of Utah, but populations have been found to be vulnerable in Wyoming and parts of Canada. It is 'apparently secure' in Montana [24].

Plant Ecology

The Golden Current is found in many plant communities around Utah and many of the United States and parts of Canada. It does well in moist valley floors and along drainage ways. The shrub can be found up to 2500 m in elevation. [25]

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