

# BugBob's Guide to *Ribes* of Orange and Western Riverside Counties

By Bob Allen, OC-CNPS, 2 January 2006

1. *No spines at leaf nodes or on fruits*; individual flower stalk (pedicel) is not jointed; flowers are in clusters (**currants**)
  2. *Leaves smooth & hairless*; flower tube very long; *sepals & petals are yellow*; petals turn deep red as they age; fruit red, orange, or black; *in flower February-April*.....**Slender-Flowered Golden Currant**, *Ribes aureum* var. *gracillimum*  
Quite uncommon, known only from moist areas within Harding Canyon and Temescal Canyon.
  - 2' *Leaves wrinkled & hairy*; flower tube short; *sepals are not yellow*, instead they are white, whitish green, pink, red, or purple; *petals are pink or white*; fruit red, aging to black;
    3. *Sepals and petals white*, about equal in length; *in flower Nov-March* ..... **White-Flowered Currant**, *Ribes indecorum*  
Occasional in the Lomas de Santiago such as Limestone Canyon, and foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains, and up into the higher elevations. Easily seen near the Ortega Candy Store, Upper San Juan Campground, and San Juan Loop Trail.
    - 3' *Sepals pink to purple; petals pink to white*; sepals twice as long as petals;  
*in flower October-March* ..... **Chaparral Currant**, *Ribes malvaceum*
      4. *Upper surface of leaf blade is dull olive-green*; flower clusters long and open  
..... **Chaparral Currant**, *Ribes malvaceum* var. *malvaceum*  
Locally rare, known only from among scrub oak chaparral on Niguel Hill in Laguna Niguel.
      - 4' *Upper surface of leaf blade is bright green*; flower clusters short and crowded  
..... **Southern California Currant**, *Ribes malvaceum* var. *viridifolium*  
Widespread and common in major canyons of the Santa Ana Mountains, usually at elevations higher than White-Flowered Currant with which it hybridizes. Easily seen along North Main Divide Road "loop" between El Cariso and Long Canyon Road.
- 1' *Obvious spines at leaf nodes and on fruits*; individual flower stalk (peduncle) is jointed and has a bract; flowers are in small groups of 1-3 and hang loosely, straight down from the stem (**gooseberries**)
  5. *Sepals, petals, & stamens 4, red*, all point downward toward the tip of the flower; stems are very spiny, 3 spines at each leaf node, often with numerous prickles between the nodes; fruit pink to red, densely covered with sticky-tipped red spines; *in flower January-May* ..... **Fuchsia-Flowered Gooseberry**, *Ribes speciosum*  
Our most common *Ribes*. Found in moist areas and canyons from coastline and foothills, up into lower elevations of the Santa Ana Mountains. Easily seen in Whiting Ranch and Limestone Canyon.
  - 5' *Sepals, petals, & stamens 5, sepals purple or red, petals white*, sepals curve backwards away from the petals; no prickles between the leaf nodes
    6. *Lower side of leaf is hairy & sticky*; flower tube longer than wide; flowers are small; sepals purple; petals white; *fruit black*, many of its spines are sticky-tipped; *in flower March-April*.....**Bitter Gooseberry**, *Ribes amarum*  
Grows among riparian, chaparral, and oak-conifer woodlands in the Santa Ana Mountains such as Silverado Canyon, Santiago Canyon, upper Trabuco Canyon, upper McVicker Canyon, and slopes of Santiago Peak.
    - 6' Lower side of leaf is hairy but not sticky
      7. *Flower tube about as long as wide; sepals red; petals white; fruit red*, its shorter bristles are sticky-tipped; *in flower January-March*..... **Southern California Hillside Gooseberry**, *Ribes californicum* var. *hesperium*  
A real treat for those who hike in winter. Found in San Juan Canyon, Santiago Canyon, Trabuco Canyon, and upper Silverado Canyon. It is especially common along the unpaved road through Arroyo Trabuco on the way to Holy Jim Canyon and the Trabuco Trail, also along Maple Springs Truck Trail out of Silverado Canyon.
      - 7' *Flower tube much longer than wide, hairy; sepals burgundy-purple; petals white; fruit purple to black*, its stout spines are not sticky-tipped but its hairs are;  
*in flower May-June* ..... **Sierra Gooseberry**, *Ribes roezlii* var. *roezlii*  
A high-elevation species, uncommon in our area, known only from riparian areas in mid-Santiago Canyon (Fleming Ranch), among conifers in upper Silverado Canyon, and among woodlands and chaparral on Santiago Peak.