

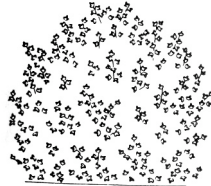
Ribes alpinum - Alpine Currant (*Saxifragaceae*)

Ribes alpinum is known as a common formal or informal hedge, with bright green spring foliage and stout, stiff stems, usually pruned to about 3' tall as a linear hedge. Alpine Currant is also found in low-maintenance group plantings where coverage without ornamental appeal, basically no flowers, fruits, autumn color, or winter interest, is desired or accepted.

FEATURES

Form

- medium-sized foliage shrub
- maturing at about 5' tall x 7' wide (if left unpruned)
- upright oval growth habit in youth, becoming spreading with age
- medium growth rate



Culture

- full sun to full shade
- performs best in full sun in moist, well-drained soils, but is very adaptable to dry soils, compacted soils, drought, shade, soils of various pH, and heavy shearing or pruning
- propagated by rooted stem cuttings
- Saxifrage Family, with anthracnose and leaf spot being the primary cosmetic diseases that may occur during very wet periods of spring or summer; other diseases and pests may occur but they are relatively minor
- commonly available, primarily in container form but also in B&B form

Foliage

- medium to dark green, alternate, ovate, shallowly trilobed, with margins that are doubly serrated, dentate, or crenate
- spring foliage emerges early and is bright green, changes to medium or dark green in summer with an attractive gloss on the leaf uppersides, while autumn color is dark green to yellowish green and ornamentally poor



Flowers

- dioecious (rarely perfect), green-yellow, flowering in Apr., and noticeable but ornamentally insignificant
- female form is generally not sold (males are supposedly resistant to rust diseases, while females are alternate hosts; therefore, males are exclusively propagated for landscape situations, since disease dispersal by females would severely impact agricultural grain crops)

Fruits

- scarlet juicy berries occur in mid-summer, on female plants or plants having a few perfect flowers (but generally not applicable, as only males are propagated and sold)
- other members of this genus are important as agricultural small fruits crops (the Currants and Gooseberries)

Twigs

- fairly stout, slightly ridged to striated, and exfoliating lightly on older stems
- light gray-brown to bright tan stems, with prominent, alternate, lime-green, relatively large terminal and lateral buds in late summer that change to light tan buds in winter

Trunk

- not applicable

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Function

- informal or formal hedge, or in group or mass plantings (where tough shrubs with dependable, season-long, dense foliage are desired [without showy flowers, fruits, or autumn color, in sun or shade situations])

Texture

- medium texture in foliage and when bare
- thick density in foliage and when bare

Assets

- bright green foliage in spring transitions to medium or dark green glossy summer foliage
- foliages all the way to the ground as a hedge (virtually unique among deciduous hedges, due to its shade tolerance)
- responds well to heavy pruning or shearing
- urban stress tolerant
- very cold hardy

Liabilities

- has little ornamental appeal (insignificant flowers, no fruits, and poor autumn color) other than its dense green foliage
- occasional cosmetic diseases may render the foliage unattractive

Habitat

- Zones 2 to 7
- Native to Europe

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- nondescript deciduous shrubs used as hedges, in group plantings, or as green globes (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*, *Lonicera xylosteum*, *Viburnum opulus* 'Nanum', etc.)
- hedges for shady situations that do not become leggy (*Buxus*, *Taxus x media*, etc.)

-*Ribes alpinum* is a better deciduous alternative to Border Privet or European Fly Honeysuckle as a formal or informal hedge in cold winter climates, in either sunny or shady situations, due to its more vigorous growth and its shade tolerance that allows it to maintain foliage to the ground.

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- the straight species (male form) has traditionally been the primary form available, but increasingly the following cultivar is becoming widespread: *Ribes alpinum* 'Green Mound' - a dwarf and even more dense male form, to 3' x 3', with greater resistance to foliage diseases