

## GOJI, WOLFBERRY

Lycium barbarum – Nightshade family

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Used to be known as the Duke of Argyll's tea tree, after the third Duke introduced it in the 1730s as part of his passion for growing exotic plants. Under this name, or its other name of wolfberry, it was usually grown as an ornamental plant, since it produces pretty small trumpet-shaped white and purple flowers, followed by the shiny red berries. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it became increasingly trendy as a superfood with anti-oxidising benefits that would cure many ailments from cancer to old age. It is generally eaten dried. As we wrote this section and chewed on some berries we began to feel increasingly optimistic, and this too is apparently a side-effect of eating goji berries...

### **Box: Anti-oxidant**

The higher the anti-oxidant score, the better the food is at absorbing cancer-causing and ageing free radicals. Measured by the ORAC scale, Oxygen Radical Absorbance (or Absorption) Capacity.

### SOIL AND POSITION

- Not fussy, as long as the soil is well-drained. Add sand or grit if your soil is heavy.
- Prefers sun, but tolerates partial shade.
- Very drought-resistant with extensive root system.

### PLANTING AND SPACING

Can be sown from seed or purchased bare rooted.

Sowing from seed

- Sow seed thinly in modules or little pots in March.
- Keep seedlings protected from frost for the first year in A cold frame or with fleece.
- Plant out established seedlings, 5-7cm/2-3in tall in late spring.

Bare-rooted

- Plant during dormant period, in winter or early spring.

Growing on

- Goji grows as a thick bush 2.5-3m/8-10ft tall, with vines that can reach 4m/13ft.
- Plant 1m/3ft apart. If you want to plant several, can be grown as a hedge.

### AFTERCARE

- Mulch in early spring. On poor soils use half-rotted compost or well-rotted manure. Alternatively feed with blood, fish and bone, 100g/m<sup>2</sup>.
- Can be hard pruned to control size.

#### PROBLEMS

- Can grow too big, cut back to the size that you need.

#### TIME TO MATURITY

- Fruits from second year, but really gets going from its fourth year.

#### HARVESTING

- Each mature plant can produce 1kg of fruit.
- Small red berries produced from August to October.

#### USES

- Dried berries taste somewhat like a raisin or cranberry and can be used in a similar way, for instance in cereals.
- Health claims range from preventing cancer, improving vision, strengthening the immune system, benefiting the complexion and making you live longer. What's not to like?