Cultural Notes for CHINESE GOOSEBERRY

Plants can be affected by severe frosts when young.

A wide range of soils suit the plants with friable loams being the best. Shelter from strong winds, either hot or cold, will reduce the chance of vine damage, and more particularly, damage by rubbing to the fruit.

Soils with a large amount of organic matter added will help plants to grow well.

PLANTING TIME Winter and early spring is the best time while plants are dormant.

POLLINATION. Chinese Gooseberries have separate Male and Female plants. One Male plant is required for each five to seven Female plants.

SPACING. Space plants 5 to 7 metres apart as they are very vigorous.

FEEDING and WATERING. Feed with Blood & Bone at planting using 500 grams to each plant mixed with the soil at the planting site. An annual dressing each Spring with a complete fertiliser (eg NPK 17:7:9) using 250 grams per plant initially, but increasing to 2 kg per plant in later years. Apply over a wide area to feed the large widespread root system. Keep the shallow roots moist at all times to avoid plant stress.

TRELLIS. Chinese Gooseberries are vigorous plants and must be trained onto some form of trellis or support. A solid structure is required and should be built at the same time as the plants are put in position. The diagrams over the page give a general idea of requirements. The trellis should be around 1.8 metres above ground level.

TRAINING Where flat topped trellises are used, train the plant to a single stem, using a light stake until it reaches the top of the structure. Allow to branch at the top training one or two leaders down the centre. From these leaders are developed the permanent horizontal fruiting branches trained towards the edges of the structure. Temporary fruiting spurs are developed along these arms as in the diagrams over the page.

PEST CONTROL. Thrips can cause damage if present in large number in the flowers and may need to be sprayed with Malathion or Pyrethrums for control. Basically no major pests or diseases affect Chinese Gooseberries.

HARVESTING. Four to 5 years after planting worthwhile crops can be harvested, with a peak after seven or eight years. Healthy plants will be productive for thirty to forty years. Pick by snapping the stalk at right angles to the stem from mid May onwards. Fruit will ripen after harvest. Pick the largest fruit first and allow the smaller fruit to increase in size. Fruit will keep 2 months without refrigeration.

The diagram below show the progressive summer pruning required to reduce excessive vigour.
If in doubt as to the sex of your Chinese Gooseberry plant, examine the flowers. This is the only way to determine what is what. The diagrams below show what to look for.

**PRUNING** Temporary fruiting arms are allowed to grow out from the permanent leader. These will grow at various angles and are tied down during winter to the trellis wires. The wider the spacing, the bigger the fruit, but aim for a spacing of around 60 cm. Exceptional vigour during growth can be controlled by Summer pruning. Winter pruning should be completed by mid August to avoid bleeding of the sap. Winter pruning begins as soon as harvesting is completed.

By November small fruit will be evident on the fruiting arms which will continue to grow and will need to be cut back. Trim to two leaves past the fruit.

In early January cut back any regrowth from the previous cut to one leaf from the fruit.

Remove any shoots that emerge from the main stem, and remove any spindly growth from the plant.

The diagram below shows the temporary fruiting arms that are replaced with new growth every three years or so by new shoots from the permanent central leader.