

Goji Berry

(Lycium barbarum)



Also referred to as Wolfberries, Duke of Argyll's Tea Tree or Matrimony Vine, goji berries can be found growing on evergreen shrubs worldwide, with most of them being imported from the Tibetan plateau and China.

Goji berries require full sun, but also benefit from shelter. They work well as hedges and possess delicate white and purple flowers.

Mature plants can reach 3m high and 1.5m wide.

The most important function of pruning is to remove old, dead and damaged stems to make room for new stems. (Flowers and berries are borne on stems grown in the spring and autumn of the year before.)

Pruning has the additional advantage of increasing sunlight penetration

and improving foliage drying, which is especially important with goji plants susceptible to verticillium wilt.

To harvest, wait till the fruit is deep red and fully ripe (usually midsummer), and then shake them onto a blanket. Handling can make them turn black. To dry goji berries, leave them on a sheet of baking paper in a cool, dry spot out of direct sunlight.

Growing goji berries from seed is not recommended as seeds are prone to rot and seedlings require warm conditions for 12 months.

Many berries are good for you. It's not clear whether goji berries are better than other types of berries.

High in vitamin C, B2, A, iron, selenium and the antioxidant polysaccharides, they constitute a welcome addition to a balanced diet

There are many ways to get goji berries into your diet:

- Eat them raw.
- Use them in cooking.
- Drink goji fruit juice.
- Use them in an herbal tea.

The benefits of these tiny berries are numerous when you consume them in moderation, but with excess intake, there are also several side effects of goji berries. They may interact with certain drugs or cause an allergic reaction in some individuals. If you take warfarin (a blood thinner), you may want to avoid them. Goji berries may also interact with diabetes drugs and blood pressure drugs.

Otherwise, it's probably safe to eat goji berries in moderation.

Check with your doctor before taking any diet supplements