



Urban Harvest  
Gardening for good.

## Goji Berries

Category:	Temperate; deciduous
Hardiness:	Should easily withstand freezes
Fruit Family:	Berry; related to tomatoes and other nightshades
Light:	Full sun
Size:	8' – 12'H x 4'W
Soil:	Well-drained, drought tolerant
Planting:	Plant containerized specimens at any time



The goji berry species (*Lycium barbarum* and *Lycium chinense*) are also called Chinese matrimony vine or wolfberry. They are very hardy, spiny, shrubby vines in the tomato-nightshade family *Solanaceae*.

These South China fruits have little horticultural history in Southeast Texas, but at least one person has had success. Although the plant will grow in part shade, yields are best in full sun. They are drought, wind and salinity hardy, and tolerate neutral to very alkaline soils from pH 6.8 to 8.2.

### Care of Goji Berry Plants

**Planting:** Since Goji often produce new plants from the roots several feet from the plant, you should plant Goji where it will be easy to mow or otherwise control root suckers. Dig a hole that is twice as wide as the container, and the same depth as the root ball. Break up the soil you removed from the hole, but do not amend it. Set the root ball in the hole and backfill with the unamended soil. In all cases, water well after planting and apply an inch of leaf mold compost around the plant. Mulch with native mulch, pine straw, or well rotted leaves.

**Pruning & Training:** The vine-like branches need regular shortening to make them stiffer, and to promote new wood that will fruit the next year. Alternatively, the un-shortened branches may be tied to a grape trellis. Prune out branches that don't produce fruit, as well as primary scaffolds less than 15 inches from the ground. Wear eye and hand protection to avoid the spines.

**Production:** Yields begin about year two or three and increase until plants are at maximum size.

**Watering:** The first summer after planting, check soil moisture 1-2 times per week and do not let the soil go dry. Gojis appreciate regular irrigation, but do not like soggy soils. They will tolerate short periods of drought.

**Fertilizing:** Apply 1/4 pound of slow release organic fertilizer per plant in February before spring growth begins and again in June. This is a couple of handfuls broadcast around the roots of each plant. Do not over-fertilize with nitrogen fertilizers as this may decrease blooming in favor of foliage growth.

**Harvesting:** Fruiting dates are not yet known for our area, but they should be from late summer in to mid-fall. Fruit should be deep fire engine red when ripe, and should never be eaten until they are. To avoid discoloration and damage to ripe berries, growers harvest by shaking the plant to dislodge the berries on to a clean cloth below the plant.

**Pests:** In some places, deer are a serious plant-eating pest and birds love any berries you don't net.

**Winter Protection:** Gojis should survive most temperatures easily, and probably are able to cope with our low chill winters.