Symphoricarpos albus (L.) Blake, common snowberry
Ribes aureum Pursh, golden currant

Some of the showy plants collected by Lewis made their way to several nurseries a few years after the expedition. Thomas Jefferson, in Monticello, and a few horticulturists of Philadelphia were instrumental in promoting commercial ventures.

Some of the seeds and cuttings Lewis brought back to Philadelphia were successfully planted and soon entered horticulturists’ catalogs. Showy ornamental plants, such as the snowberry and the golden currant, had high appeal for landscaping. Thomas Jefferson believed that previously unknown plants collected by Lewis could be useful additions to the agriculture and commerce of the young nation. Thus, commercial ventures with plants then unknown on the East Coast formed part of the objectives for the Lewis and Clark’s expedition.

"Lewis and Clark as Naturalists" website
http://www.mnh.si.edu/lewisandclark/index.html?loc=/lewisandclark/home.html

Common snowberry - La flore et la pomme françaises : histoire et figure en couleur, des fleurs et des fruits de France ou naturalisés sur le sol français - © 1995-2006 Missouri Botanical Garden
A curious amateur botanist, Jefferson was a key figure in the very active enterprises of horticulturists and botanists of Philadelphia. He experimented with new plants from various origins, including vegetables and other food plants, in his extensive gardens at Monticello. For a few years after the expedition, Jefferson grew the Arikara corn and beans, Indian tobacco, an unidentified type of pea, the Osage orange, and the snowberry bush, all of them part of Lewis and Clark’s collecting efforts. At the turn of the 19th century many plants from all around the world were introduced either as rarities in private estates or as potential commercial products. For example, this is how the gingko (Gingko biloba) and the Lombardy poplar (Populus nigra) made their way to our parks. Plants native to the country west of the Mississippi River newly acquired by President Jefferson had a special appeal for these early horticulturists.

At Jefferson's request, two famous growers and knowledgeable botanists, William Hamilton (1743-1813) and Bernard McMahon (1775-1816) experimented with the cuttings, roots, and seeds of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (Cutright 1969:373.) For months and years after the expedition the three of them exchanged letters, advice, and cuttings.

In February 28, 1812, McMahon sent cuttings of the snowberry and the golden currant to Jefferson (Cutright 1969:373). Three years later, in 1815, the snowberry was for sale in McMahon’s American Gardener’s Almanac, while the golden currant had been offered by the Landreths’ nursery in Philadelphia as early as 1811.
Lewis collected other plants soon offered in gardening catalogs.

*Linum lewisi* Pursh, prairie flax, sold by McMahon in his 1811 catalog, is still a familiar plant in seed catalogs.

*Gaillardia aristata* Pursh, common gaillardia, probably “rediscovered” after the Lewis and Clark expedition, was more successfully distributed in England than in the US.

*Clarkia pulchella* Pursh, pinkfairies or ragged robin, did better in England, but it is popular today in US seed catalogs.

*Euphorbia marginata* Pursh, snow-on-the-mountain, a common plant on the Great Plains and eastward (Earle and Reveal 2003), became widely available in mid-19th-century seeds catalog (Cornett 2003).

From: *Landreth’s American Seeds from Philadelphia* (1896)
Seed Catalogs from Smithsonian Institution Libraries
Digital Collection 2002–Smithsonian Institution Libraries

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