

Malpighia glabra Barbados Cherry¹

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Introduction

Barbados cherry develops into a thick, rounded canopy of fairly delicate foliage (Fig. 1). Small pink flowers appear periodically from April to October and are followed about one month later by bright red, tart-tasting, 1-inch fruits which are extremely high in vitamin C. It is commonly available in nurseries throughout south Florida

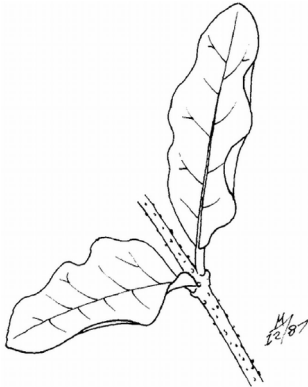


Figure 1. Barbados cherry

General Information

Scientific name: *Malpighia glabra*

Pronunciation: mal-PIG-ee-uh GLAY-bruh

Common name(s): Barbados cherry

Family: *Malpighiaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; container or above-ground planter; border; hedge; near a deck or patio; screen

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 10 to 12 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

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Leaf shape: lanceolate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: red
Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption; persists on the plant; attracts birds

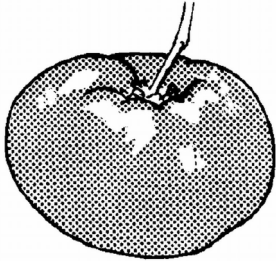


Figure 3. Fruit of Barbados cherry

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: brown
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

This open, upright, evergreen shrub grows at a slow pace to 12 feet tall and wide, making it well-suited as a foundation planting for larger buildings or used in the rear of the shrubbery border. Trained to numerous multitrunks, it can be used as a small accent tree just as Japanese ligustrum is used. The multitrunks rise sinuously up through the crown creating a sculptured specimen well-suited for placing near a patio, deck or entry way to attract attention. It looks great lighted at night from below the tree.

Growing in full sun or partial shade, Barbados cherry needs fertile, nematode-free soil and is not salt-tolerant.

Plant 5 to 6 feet apart for a mass planting or to develop a tall, thick screen.

Propagation is by layering or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

Pests include nematodes, whiteflies, scale, and plant bugs, which will attack and deform the fruit.