



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Mahonia bealei*¹

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Introduction

This slow-growing plant is an attention-getting specimen wherever it is used (Fig. 1). With spikes of bright yellow, slightly fragrant flowers, glossy, grey green leaves, and attractive multiple stems, Leatherleaf Mahonia has potential for many uses in the shady landscape. The stiff, hard, leathery leaflets have sharp marginal spines, giving the plant a holly-like appearance. Flowers appear in late winter or spring and have a delicate fragrance similar to citrus blossoms. The flowers are followed by large clusters of striking purplish-blue berries that remain throughout the summer, if not devoured by birds who seem to find them irresistible.

General Information

Scientific name: *Mahonia bealei*

Pronunciation: mah-HOE-nee-uh BEEL-lee-eye

Common name(s): Leatherleaf Mahonia

Family: *Berberidaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 9A (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; specimen; accent

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

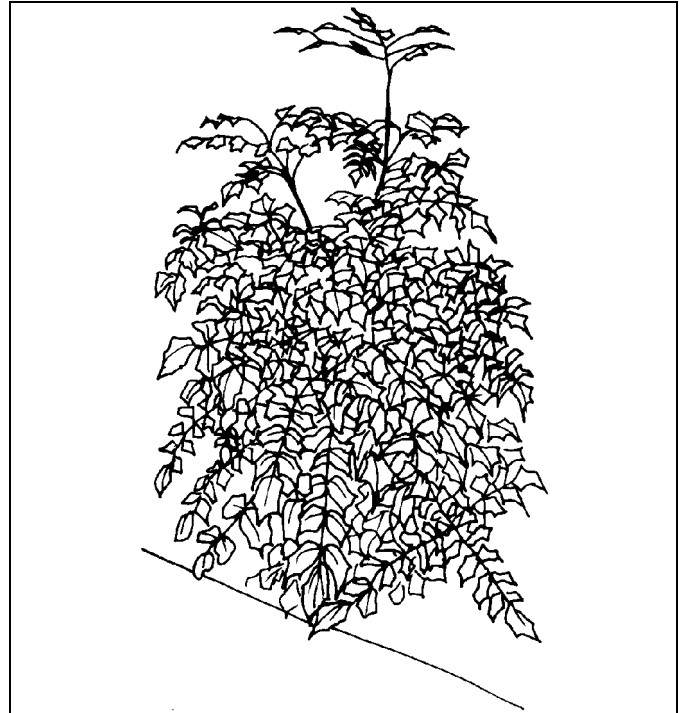


Figure 1. Leatherleaf Mahonia.

Description

Height: 5 to 10 feet

Spread: 3 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-376, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound
- Leaf margin:** spiny
- Leaf shape:** ovate
- Leaf venation:** pinnate; palmate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color:** blue or blue-green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** yellow
- Flower characteristic:** winter flowering; spring flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** oval
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** blue

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

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:** thick

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
- Soil tolerances:** slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
- Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 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: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Plant in groups of at least three spaced two feet apart for the best garden effect. The flowers and fruit are striking when planted in mass and displayed against a background of green foliage provided by a taller, dense shrub.

Requiring little care except for an occasional watering once established, Leatherleaf Mahonia performs best when given partial shade and well-drained soil. Pruning is not required due the very slow growth rate. Growth is slow and plants are thinner in total shade.

Propagation is by cuttings or seeds.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

Several leaf spots may be seen, but infected leaves can be picked off and destroyed.

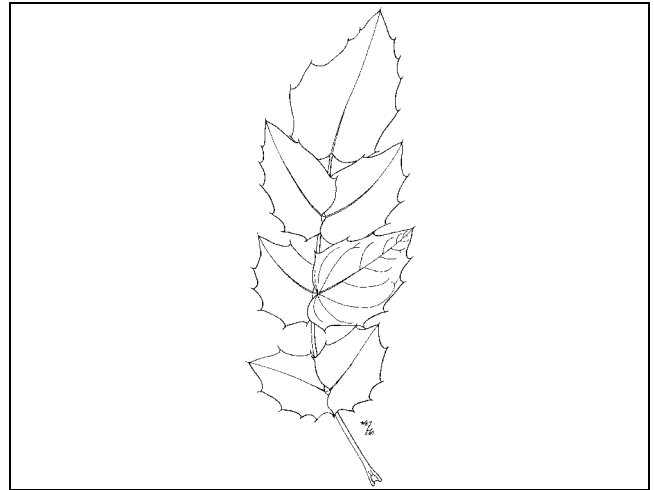


Figure 3. Foliage of Leatherleaf Mahonia