Mahonia lomariifolia

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Giving much the appearance of stiff, crinkly, barbed ferns, Chinese Hollygrape provides a dramatic effect when used in groups near entryways, on shaded patios, or set in the landscape where night-time lighting can enhance its silhouette on the walls of the house (Fig. 1). This upright, evergreen shrub makes an attractive mass planting or north-side foundation planting in the shade. The flowers and fruits are striking when the shrub is planted in mass and displayed against a background of green foliage provided by a taller, dense shrub.

General Information

Scientific name: Mahonia lomariifolia
Pronunciation: mah-HOE-nee-uh loe-mair-ree-iff-FOLE-lee-uh
Common name(s): Chinese Hollygrape
Family: Berberidaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 8 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

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet
Spread: 3 to 4 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: coarse
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound
Leaf margin: spiny
Leaf shape: oblong
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

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: very 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: 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:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**

The thick, spiny, glossy green leaflets are set off by large clusters of very showy, lemon yellow flowers which project above the foliage. Flowers appear in winter or early spring and are followed by powdery blue berries which are very popular with the birds. This is one of the most beautiful of the mahonias and it deserves to be used more often. Plant on two to three foot centers for a lush, mass effect.

Growing best in partial shade, Chinese Hollygrape does not tolerate salt or poor drainage. Full-day sun can burn the foliage.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

**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 Chinese Hollygrape**