



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Malpighia glabra*¹

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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.

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

Description

Height: 10 to 12 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

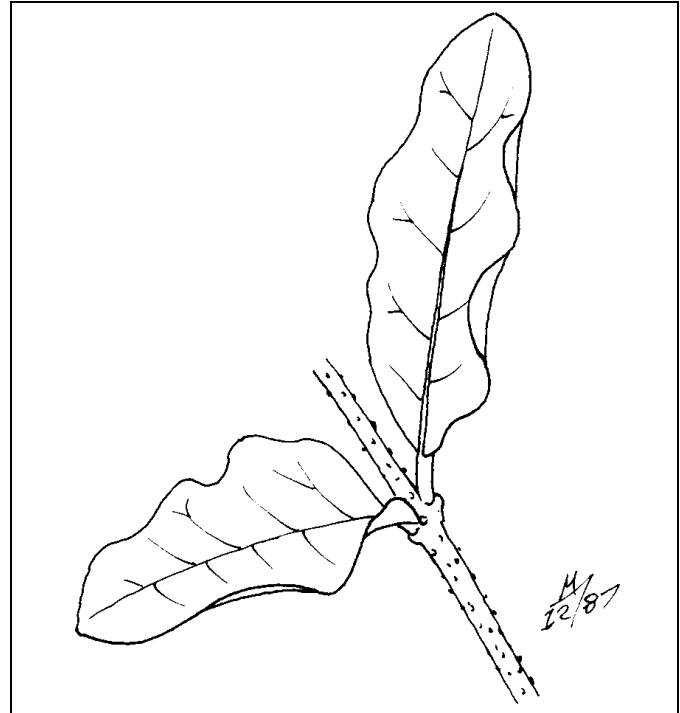


Figure 1. Barbados Cherry.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

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.

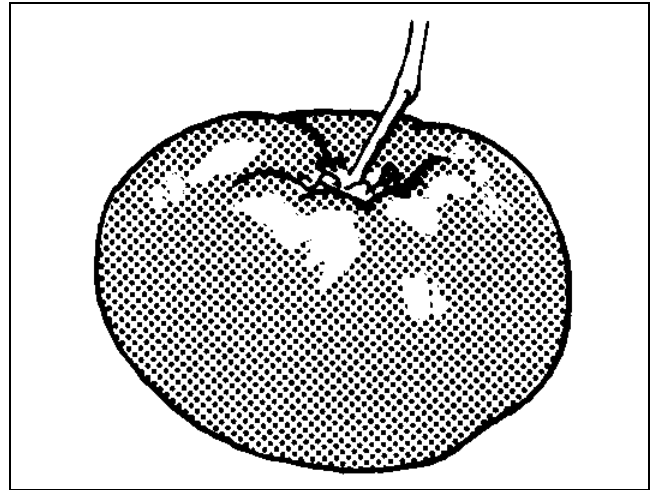


Figure 3. Fruit of Barbados Cherry