

Malpighia glabra Barbados Cherry, Wild Crapemyrtle¹

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Introduction

Barbados cherry develops into a thick, rounded canopy of fairly delicate foliage. 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. Full Form - *Malpighia glabra*: Barbados Cherry, Wild Crapemyrtle
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf and Fruit - *Malpighia glabra*: Barbados Cherry, Wild Crapemyrtle
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Figure 3. Bark - *Malpighia glabra*: Barbados Cherry, Wild Crapemyrtle
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General Information

Scientific name: *Malpighia glabra*

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

Common name(s): Barbados cherry, wild crapemyrtle

Family: *Malpighiaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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 4. 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

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: 0.5 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

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 multi-trunks, it can be used as a small accent tree just as Japanese ligustrum is used. The multi-trunks 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.