

# ***Malpighia glabra* Barbados Cherry, Wild Crapemyrtle<sup>1</sup>**

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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, 1inch 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

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Bark - *Malpighia glabra*: Barbados Cherry, Wild Crapemyrtle

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

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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.