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| **Barbados Cherry - *Malpighia punicifolia*** | |
| 'Florida Sweet' Fig. 1 *Malpighia punicifolia* 'Florida Sweet'  Showing the flesh Fig. 2  Showing the flesh  Leaves Fig. 3  Leaves  Underside of Leaf Fig. 4  Underside of leaf  Flower Fig. 6  Flower close up  Inflorescense Fig. 7   Grown as a bush Fig. 14  Mature fruit and leaves  Fruiting habit of the acerola Fig. 15  Fruiting habit of the acerola  Acerolas. Prontas para ser colhidas Fig. 16   Malpighia glabra Fig. 20   Bowl of Barbados cherries Fig. 21  Bowl of Barbados cherries  Trunk habit Fig. 22  Trunk habit  Taken in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden Fig. 23  Taken in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden | **Scientific name** *Malpighia punicifolia, M. glabra*L. **Pronunciation** mal-PIG-ee-uh GLAY-bruh **Common names** English: West Indian cherry, native cherry, garden cherry, French cherry; Spanish: acerola, cereza, cereza colorada, cereza de la sabana, or grosella; French: cerisier, cerise de St. Domingue; Portuguese: cerejeira; Venezuela: semeruco, or cemeruco; Netherlands Antilles: shimarucu; Philippines: malpi (an abbreviation of the generic name) [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Synonyms** *Bunchosia parvifolia* S.Watson; *Malpighia biflora* Poir.; *M. dicipiens* Sessé & Moc.; *M. fallax* Salisb.; *M. glabra* var. *acuminata* A. Juss.; *M. glabra* var. *antillana* Urb. & Nied.; *M. glabra* var. *guatemalensis* Nied.; *M. glabra* var. *lancifolia* Nied.; *M. glabra* var. *typica* Nied.; *M. glabra* var. *undulata* (A. Juss.) Nied.; *M. lucida* Pav. ex A. Juss.;*M. lucida* Pav. ex Moric.; *M. myrtoides* Moritz ex Nied.; *M. neumanniana* A. Juss.; *M. nitida* Mill.; *M. oxycocca* var. *biflora* (Poir.) Nied.; *M. peruviana* Moric.; *M. punicifolia* L.; *M. semeruco* A.Juss.; *M. undulata* A. Juss.; *M. uniflora* Tussac ; *M. virgata* Pav. [**6**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Family** Malpighiaceae **Origin** Native to the Lesser Antilles from St. Croix to Trinidad, also Curacao and Margarita and neighboring northern South America as far south as Brazil [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **USDA hardiness zones** 9b-11 **Uses** Specimen; container or above-ground planter; border; hedge; near a deck or patio; screen [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Height** 10-12 ft (3-3,7 m) **Spread** 10-15 ft (3-4.6 m) **Crown** Rounded canopy of fairly delicate foliage [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Plant habit** Typically multi-trunked or clumping stems [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Growth rate** Relatively fast growing **Trunk/bark/branches** Minutely hairy branches; short trunk to 4 in. (10 cm) in diameter [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Leaf** Evergreen; simple, opposite, lanceolate; 2-4 in. (5.1-10.2 cm) [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Flower** Small; pink; April to October **Fruit** Round; bright red, fleshy; tart tasting; persists on the plant; 0.5-1 in. (1.3-2.5 cm) [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Season** May-Nov.; sparsely most of the year [**USDA Nutrient Content**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/documents/BarbadosCherry.pdf)*pdf* **Light requirement** Part sun or semi-shade **Soil tolerances** Slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **pH preference** 5.5-6.5 **Drought tolerance** High **Aerosol salt tolerance** Not salt-tolerant **Soil salt tolerance** Not salt-tolerant **Cold tolerance** Mature trees can survive brief exposure to 28 ºF (-2.22 ºC); young plants are killed by any drop below 30 °F (-1.11 ºC ) **Plant spacing** 36-60 in. (91.5-152 cm) **Roots** Shallow root system **Invasive potential**[**\***](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Invasives) Not known to be invasive **Pest resistance** Pests include nematodes, whiteflies, scale, and plant bugs, which will attack and deform the fruit [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) **Known hazard** People who pick Barbados cherries without gloves and long sleeves may suffer skin irritation from contact with the minute stinging hairs on the leaves and petioles [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Reading Material** [**Barbados Cherry - A Mother's Day Gift That Lasts**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/BarbadosCherrOkeeNews.htm), Okeechobee News, University of Florida [***Malpighia glabra* Barbados Cherry**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/documents/BarbadosCherryGuilman.pdf), University of Florida*pdf* [**Barbados Cherry**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/BarbadosCherryJuliaMorton.htm), Fruits of Warm Climates [**Barbados Cherry**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/BarbadosCherryUF.htm), University of Florida Palm Beach County [**Barbados Cherry**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/BarbadosCRFG.htm), California Rare Fruit Growers  **Origin** The Barbados cherry is native to the Lesser Antilles from St. Croix to Trinidad, also Curacao and Margarita and neighboring northern South America as far south as Brazil. It has become naturalized in Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico after cultivation, and is commonly grown in dooryards in the Bahamas and Bermuda, and to some extent in Central and South America.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Description** In a work by Julia F. Morton that was entitled ‘Fruits of warm climates’, it was stated that this fruit tree’s correct botanical name should be *Malpighia punicifolia* and not *Malpighia glabra*. Morton stated that latter botanical name refers to a wild relative of the Barbados cherry that bears smaller and pointed leaves, and produces smaller flowers and fruits. However, in Plant Resources of Southeast Asia (PROSEA), both names are synonymous and used to refer to the same plant.  The Barbados cherry is a minor fruiting species that produces a dependable crop in South Florida. The tre is compact, attractive and requires little care. It is well adapted to Florida growing conditions and fruits abundantly over many months. As a dooryard tree it has many advantages. Better selections are mild and faintly sweet. However, the grumichama and cherry of the Rio Grande both produce a superior cherrylike fruit. [**7**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Leaves** Its evergreen leaves are elliptic, oblong, obovate, or narrowly oblanceolate, somewhat wavy, 3/4 to 2 3/4 in (2-7 cm) long, 3/8 to 1 5/8 in (9.5-40 mm) wide, obtuse or rounded at the apex, acute or cuneate at the base; bearing white, silky, irritating hairs when very young; hairless, dark green, and glossy when mature. [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)   |  | | --- | | Leaf attachment | | Fig. 5 |   **Flowers** The flowers, in sessile or short-peduncled cymes, have 5 pink or lavender, spoon-shaped, fringed petals. [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Flower bud | Flower buds | Inflorescense close-up | | Fig. 8 | Fig. 9 | Fig. 10 |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Inflorescense | Malpighia glabra | Fruit ready to form | | Fig. 11 | Fig. 12 | Fig. 13 |   **Fruit** The fruits, borne singly or in 2's or 3's in the leaf axils, are oblate to round, cherry-like but more or less obviously 3-lobed; 1/2 to 1 in (1.25-2.5 cm) wide; bright-red, with thin, glossy skin and orange-colored, very juicy, acid to subacid, pulp. The 3 small, rounded seeds each have 2 large and 1 small fluted wings, thus forming what are generally conceived to be 3 triangular, yellowish, leathery-coated, corrugated inedible "stones". [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) Most varieties of acerola contain at least the minimum adult daily requirement of vitamin C, so if you don't like taking vitamin tablets, simply eat a Barbados cherry every day to get your vitamin C.[**4**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Barbados Cherries | Fruit habit | Acerola (Malpighia emarginata ou Malpighia glabra) | | Fig. 17 | Fig. 18 | Fig. 19 |   **Varieties** Barbados cherry seedlings are quite variable and fruit quality is usually not as good as desired. A number of improved selections have been developed. Homeowners should look for improved clones such as `Florida Sweet' and `B-17'. The latter is an acid selection with much larger fruit.  **Season** In Florida, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico and Hawaii the fruiting season varies with the weather. There may be a spring crop ripening in May and then successive small crops off and on until December, but sometimes, if spring rains are lacking, there may be no fruits at all until December and then a heavy crop.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Harvesting** For home use, as dessert, the fruits are picked when fully ripe. For processing or preserving, they can be harvested when slightly immature, when they are turning from yellow to red. As there is continuous fruiting over long periods, picking is done every day, every other day, or every 3 days to avoid loss by falling. [**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Pollination** In Florida, bees visit Barbados cherry flowers in great numbers and are the principal pollinators.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Propagation** Barbados cherry is usually propagated by [**air layering**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/AirLayeringInfo.htm) (marcottage) or by hardwood cuttings. Air layering is best done during spring and summer while the plants are growing and requires 6 to 8 weeks for rooting. Leafy hardwood cuttings from healthy plants root within 2 months. Indolebutyric acid will help to induce rooting. It can also be propagated by side veneer or cleft grafts on young seedlings or on trees which produce inferior fruit.[**5**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Planting** Acerola grows well in a wide variety of soils, provided they are well drained and are not infested with nematodes. Choose sites with good water drainage, as this plant does not like wet feet. Salt tolerance for this plant is moderate - it will not do well if planted in ocean-front breezes or irrigated with brackish water. New plants are best set out in spring, just before the rainy season. Specimen trees in home plantings should be allowed at least 15 feet of growing room.[**3**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Fertilizing** Fertilize trees with a general-purpose fertilizer every three to four months to help promote good growth and fruit production. Most Barbados cherries can take small amounts of salt spray, but are not considered highly salt-tolerant for oceanfront plantings. During periods of drought, Barbados cherries will benefit from heavy mulching, since they have very shallow roots which easily dry out. Weekly irrigations are suggested during the spring dry season to help promote heavier fruiting.[**4**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Pruning** The plant will tolerate heavy pruning, but requires time for recovery. In more tropical areas, plants do not seem overly affected by pruning. Can be kept as a small bush (e.g. 5 ft) and will produce well. [**8**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Pests** The major pest in Florida is the Caribbean fruit fly, *Anastrepha suspensa*, which seems to attack all but very sour fruits and the larvae are commonly found inside.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) A serious pest of the Barbados cherry is the root-knot nematode which weakens the plant, causing it to drop leaves and display symptoms of malnutrition. Severe infestations inhibit growth and fruit production. This nematode is a more serious problem in sandy soils than in the alkaline, rockland soils. It is not a problem in marl or clay soils. Preventive measures include use of sterilized soil in propagation, fumigation of the planting site and heavy mulching around the tree.[**5**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) Frequently, the fruit is attacked by plant bugs which sting the fruit, giving it a dimpled appearance. This may result in off flavors and reduced fruit size. There is no practical control for this pest. Other insects which attack the tree include various scale insects, whiteflies, aphids and caterpillars.[**5**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Diseases** Few diseases have been reported. However, in Florida, there are cases of anthracnose caused by *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides*, and leafspotting by the fungus, *Cercospora bunchosiae*, is a serious malady in Florida, Puerto Rico and Hawaii.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) Cercospora leaf spot is the only disease problem on Barbados cherry of much concern in Florida where its occurrence is associated with high humidity. The spots are roughly circular, slightly sunken, dark brown lesions with gray centers and are surrounded by a yellow halo. The lesions occur on both leaf surfaces and are typically larger on young leaves than on mature ones.[**5**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Food Uses** Barbados cherries are eaten out-of-hand, mainly by children. For dessert use, they are delicious merely stewed with whatever amount of sugar is desired to modify the acidity of the particular type available. The fresh juice will prevent darkening of bananas sliced for fruit cups or salads. It can be used for gelatin desserts, punch or sherbet, and has been added as an ascorbic acid supplement to other fruit juices. The fruits may be made into sirup or, with added pectin, excellent jelly, jam, and other preserves.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) Wine made from Barbados cherries in Hawaii was found to retain 60% of the ascorbic acid.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography) Acerolas contain plenty of Vitamin A, some B and plenty of minerals. Most fruits and vegetables lose their Vitamin C when cooked, but research reveals that this does not happen with Acerolas, so you can make jellies and cordials for the winter. Frozen Acerola Juice was found to retain 85% of its original Vitamin C after eight months of freezing. [**9**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Medicinal Uses**[**\*\***](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Medicinal) The fruits are considered beneficial to patients with liver ailments, diarrhea and dysentery, as well as those with coughs or colds. The juice may be gargled to relieve sore throat.[**2**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **Other Uses** The wood is surprisingly hard and heavy. Trials have demonstrated that it refuses to ignite even when treated with flammable fluid unless perfectly dry.[2](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)  **General** 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. [**1**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/barbadoscherry.htm#Bibliography)   **Further Reading** [**Acerola**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/AcerolaArcRFC.htm), Archives of the Rare Fruit Council of Australia [**Acerola Cherry**](https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/AcerolaSTFC.htm), Sub-Tropical Fruit Club of Qld    [**List of Growers and Vendors**](https://www.growables.org/Useful_Links/growers_vendors.html) |
| Bibliography  1Gilman, Edward F. "*Malpighia glabra* Barbados Cherry." [***edis.ifas.ufl.edu***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#EDIS). This document is FPS-390, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Pub. date Oct. 1999. Rev. May 2007. Reviewed Feb. 2014. Web. 20 Jan. 2015. 2*Fruits of Warm Climates*. Julia F. Morton, Miami,1987. 3Culbert, Daniel F. "Barbados Cherry - A Mother's Gift That Lasts." Feature Article for Okeechobee News, 10 May 1998, *University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agriculture, Okeechobee County Extension Service*, [**okeechobee.ifas.ufl.edu.**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#UFOkeechobe) 4Joyner, Gene. "Barbados Cherry." [***ifas.ufl.edu***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#EDIS). Palm Beach County Extension Service. N.d. Web. 21 Jan. 2015. 5Phillips, R..L. "Barbados  Cherry." [***ifas.ufl.edu***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#EDIS). This document is FC28, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date Apr. 1994. Reviewed Nov. 2005. (Archived). Web. 21 Jan. 2015. 6 "*Malpighia glabra* L. synonyms." The Plant List (2010). Version 1. [***theplantlist.org***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#ThePlantList). Web. 25 Mar. 2017. 7 Boning, Charles R. *Florida's Best Fruiting Plants- Native and Exotic Trees, Shrubs, and Vines*. Sarasota, Pineapple Press, 2006. 8 "Barbados Cherry." [***crfg.org***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#CaliforniaRareFruitGrowersInc). 1969-1989. Web. 21 Jan. 2015. 9 Spear, Marjorie. "Acerola." [***rfcarchives.org.au***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#ArchivesRareFruitCouncilAustralia). Archives of the Rare Fruit Council of Australia. July. 1987. Web. 26 Mar. 2017.  Photographs  Fig.1,2,17Maguire, Ian. Malpighia glabra L., *Barbados cherry cv. Florida Sweet*. 2002. Tropical Fruit Photography Picture Archive. [***trec.ifas.ufl.edu***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#IanMaguire). Web. 21 Jan. 2015. Fig.3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,13,22Kwan. Malpighia glabra [*Acerola, Barbados Cherry*]. 2009.[***naturelovesyou.sg***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#PlantObservatory). Web. 21 Jan. 2015. Fig.7,14,21Malpighia glabra. N.d. Top Tropicals Tropical Plant Catalog.[***toptropicals.com***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#TopTropicals). Web. 21 Jan. 2015. Fig.12,20Cerlin Ng. Malpighia glabra. 2015. [***flickr.com***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#Flickr). ([**CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/CreativeCommons.htm)). Web. 26 Mar. 2017. Fig.15Chaves, Rafael. *Acerola*. 2006. [***flickr.com***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#Flickr). ([**CC BY-NC 2.0**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/CreativeCommons.htm)). Web. 26 Mar. 2017. Fig.16Teix, Nori. *Acerolas. Prontas para ser colhidas*. [***flickr.com***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#Flickr). ([**CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/CreativeCommons.htm)). Web. 26 Mar. 2017. Fig.18Andréatl. *Português*: Malpighia glabra. 2011. [***commons.wikimedia.org***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#WikemediaCommons). ([**CC BY-SA 3.0**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/CreativeCommons.htm)). Web. 25 Mar. 2017. Fig.19Paulo. *Acerola* (Malpighia emarginata *ou* Malpighia glabra). 2013. [***flickr.com***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#Flickr). ([**CC BY-NC 2.0**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/CreativeCommons.htm)). Web. 26 Mar. 2017. Fig.23Manske, Magnus. *Taken in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden*. 2010. [***commons.wikimedia.org***](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#WikemediaCommons). ([**CC BY-SA 3.0**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/CreativeCommons.htm)). Web. 25 Mar. 2017.  \* [**UF/IFAS Assessment of Non-native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas**](https://www.growables.org/about_us/credits.htm#UFIFASInvasive) \*\* Information provided is not intended to be used as a guide for treatment of medical conditions.  Published 20 Jan. 2015 LR. Last update 22 Sept. 2018 LR | |