

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH OCTOBER, 2010

BARBADOS CHERRY, *MALPIGHIA GLABRA*



Barbados Cherry with Fruit



Detail of Flower

Barbados Cherry is a common name used for several species in the family Malpighiaceae. The species *Malpighia glabra* is native to thickets, brushlands and palm groves of South Texas, while a similar species, *M. emarginata*, occurs in Florida. In any case, this is a lovely evergreen plant for mild climates. It has delicate pink flowers that bloom intermittently from March through October. They look almost like small Crepe Myrtle flowers, hence another common name, Wild Crepe Myrtle. The flowers are followed by bright red fruit that are higher in Vitamin C than oranges. However, birds and small mammals also love the fruit, so you'll need to be quick to harvest them.

Barbados Cherry is variable in its growth habit. Some types can get to be large shrubs, up to 9' tall, while there are some that remain small, no taller than 3'. The latter make good patio pot plants. As a large shrub it takes well to pruning, and can be used as a topiary specimen. It prefers a partly shady location and has low to moderate water requirements. It is not particular to soil type, and will grow in well drained sand, loam, clay or limestone. It does need protection from deer.

Barbados Cherry may be found in nurseries that feature native plants. It can be started from seeds collected from ripe fruit, or from softwood cuttings taken in June. Cuttings assure that the new plants will have the same growth characteristics as the parent.