

# NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

## *Lindheimer Chapter*

### PLANT OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY, 2012

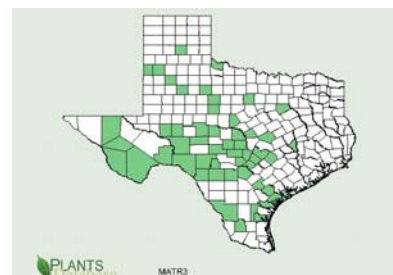
#### **AGARITA, *MAHONIA TRIFOLIOLATA***



**Agarita with Fruit**



**Agarita Flower**



**USDA Range Map: Texas**

Agarita is a small evergreen shrub of the American Southwest (Texas, New Mexico and Arizona). Under favorable conditions it can grow to 8' tall, although it is more typically 3' to 6'. Its leaves resemble those of a holly. They have sharp pointed tips that are as tough as thorns, making this a difficult plant to get close to. While usually grey-green in color, in western locations they can be blue-grey.

Agarita has small yellow flowers in early spring (February & March) which fill the air with their sweet fragrance and are considered a good source for honey. These are followed in early summer by small red, tasty berries. Birds and small mammals love them, so there usually aren't enough left to harvest.

If you can find a bush with lots of berries, the thorny leaves make them hard to pick. The most recommended way is to lay a sheet under the bush, and beat it until the berries have all been knocked off. Thus collected, they can be used to make a delicious jelly or even a wine if you are so inclined.

Agarita is typically found in dry limestone soils in sun or part shade. In the landscape it can make a good accent plant or hedge that is deer resistant and has multiple wildlife benefits. It is difficult to transplant from the wild, and mixed results are reported in starting it from seeds or cuttings. Plants can be found in selected native plant nurseries.