



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Oregon Grape (*Berberis aquifolium*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/oregon-grape-berberis-aquifolium/

By colliiek2

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***Neither a grape or a holly be...
This evergreen is not a tree.
The spike and point to clusters yellow,
Makes the fruit a favorite fellow.***

Oregon grape became our State Flower in 1899. Choosing a favorite from so many beauties must have been difficult.



Oregon Grape flower and leaves (image courtesy of Oregon State University, Landscape)

State flowers provide a way to showcase abundance, beauty, historical significance, feelings, and economic prowess. Oregon grape was chosen to represent beauty and abundance.

Why Oregon Grape?

The common plant name suggests that this plant is a grape. It is not.

Oregon Grape is a woody evergreen shrub under the *Berberis Barberry* family. Barberry shrubs are common in many Pacific Northwest landscapes.

Where Found?

Oregon Grape grows in Southeast Alaska, east into Alberta, Canada, and south into central New Mexico. It often grows in Douglas-fir forests common in the Pacific Northwest.

Clusters of bright yellow flowers makes this plant easy to identify in the early spring. In the fall, the plant produces a crop of small, purple-ish-black grape-shaped fruit. The fruit is bitter, but edible.



Oregon Grape flower close up (image courtesy of Oregon State University, Landscape)

Not a Holly

The dark green, glossy holly-like leaflets have sharp spines and can reach 12-inches in length.

It is not closely related to a holly. Like a holly, this plant will tolerate poor soils, resist summer drought, and create minimal leaf litter. It rarely grows over four feet tall.

Shiny leaves are usually a sign that a plant will resist wilting making them attractive to florists. Depending on the variety (and there are several), the leaf color may shift in the fall to more of a purple-ish tint.

Who Loves Ya?

Birds love the berries, along with the bees and butterflies. Berries can be used to make juice, jelly, jam, and wine. **Note:** The berries are quite tart and have large seeds. Berries are best eaten after the first frost.

Indigenous people used the inner bark and roots to make yellow dye; berries make a purple.

Medical

Medicines for stomach ailments and fighting bacterial/fungal infections have been made from rhizomes. There is even documentation show it might help with psoriasis.

Other Uses

Oregon Grape is deer resistant. The sharp spiny leaves make formidable natural barriers.

The plant does not require regular fertilization. A bit of compost over the root zone will help it retain moisture and reduce weeds).

The Oregon Grape provided much utility for pioneering families and indigenous peoples in our area.

REFERENCE:

–World Atlas, *What is the State Flower of Oregon?*

(<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-state-flower-of-oregon.html>)

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(<https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/plants/mahonia-aquifolium>)

–Web MD (<https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-493/oregon-grape>)

–Wikipedia, Oregon Grape (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahonia_aquifolium and [Berberis_aquifolium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berberis_aquifolium))

–Britannica Encyclopedia, Oregon Grape (<https://www.britannica.com/plant/Oregon-grape>)

–Oregon Grape-Holly Care

(<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/shrubs/mahonia/grape-holly-plant-care.htm>)