



## Emerald Goddess Gardens [emeraldgoddessgardens.com](http://emeraldgoddessgardens.com)

- Botanical Name: *Malpighia glabra*
- Common Name: Barbados Cherry Tree
- Plant Family: Malpigiaceae
- Mature Size: up to 20 ft
- Growth Habit: Tree or Shrub
- Bloom Color: Pink
- Bloom Form: 5 Petaled Flower
- Bloom Time: Summer
- Water Needs: Moderate
- Light Needs: Full Sun
- Recommended Zones: 9, 10, 11
- Key Features: Produces tart cherry fruits
- Suggested Uses: Fruit production, small shade tree
- Growers Notes : This plant can be pruned to remain a short shrub or grow into a taller tree form.



***Malpighia glabra*** or the **Barbados Cherry Tree** is a very versatile shrub or tree that became prominent shortly following World War II. Some 300 trees were planted following the war to slow soil erosion in the Southern U.S., and several thousand were later distributed to war veterans to add to their Victory Gardens. When it was discovered that the fruits of this tree were extremely high in ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), commercial production of these trees for agricultural use began. Ultimately, it was discovered that mass production of these fruits for Vitamin C was not nearly as efficient as artificial Vitamin C production and agricultural growth of these plants greatly decreased.

The Barbados Cherry can be classified as tropical or subtropical as mature trees can survive brief dips below freezing. Trees that are not yet established will perish in temperatures below freezing. Heavy watering during the dry seasons will encourage the tree to bear more fruits that are sweeter in taste. The high ascorbic acid content of the fruit may make it taste very sour even when ripe.

While the Barbados Cherry typically bears fruits in the summer months, it is extremely sensitive to changes in climate and watering conditions. This sensitivity can lead to seemingly random periods of blooming and fruit bearing during Winter. This fruit bearing plant can very easily be pruned and shaped into tree form or a shrub depending on desired growth habit.

- Plant in well draining soil.
- Locate in full sun
- Provide supplemental irrigation until well established.
- Prune lightly after flowering to encourage branching and shape.
- Feed a good quality bloom boosting fertilize with the initial planting and yearly thereafter.
- Protect from frost and freeze until very well established.
- Protect mature tree from high winds.

For quick answers to your growing or planting questions, just email us at [service@emeraldgoddessgardens.com](mailto:service@emeraldgoddessgardens.com)

If you don't know your USDA Planting Zone, you can check the map on our website site at [emeraldgoddessgardens.com](http://emeraldgoddessgardens.com)

## Care of Your New Tree

Here are a few basic guidelines for handling and caring for your tree:

Direct planting of 4 inch starter size plants or plugs directly into the landscape is not generally recommended, with a few exceptions. So, for the best results with your new plant we suggest that it be repotted into a larger pot and allowed to grow larger until the new pot is filled with roots before setting out.

Check the recommended USDA Zone Range for the plant. Many gardeners are able to successfully grow plants outside their recommended Zones, but this is dependent upon providing the type of environment and care the plant needs.

- Immediately repot the new plant into a 6 inch to 10 inch diameter pot. A 6 inch pot is recommended for starter plugs, and a 10 inch in recommended for 4 inch diameter starter pots.
- Use a good quality commercial bagged potting media.
- Apply a high quality, slow release plant food according to the label directions. Do not use hot, all chemical, quick release fertilizers like 6-6-6 or 10-10-10.
- Check the recommended location in the plant specifics and position accordingly. Note that plants that are suitable for growing in full sun should be acclimated, and young plants should be protected from direct, very hot sun while they are becoming established.
- Maintain consistent and uniform moisture in the soil. Take care not to over water. Some plants prefer to dry a bit between waterings, so check the plant specifics.
- Packing crystals may be re-used to conserve water, but do so with caution as they hold 6000 times their weight in water.
- If re-using crystals, mix and incorporate them thoroughly throughout the potting media.
- Be sure the pot can drain, and that the bottom of the pot does not sit submerged in water for more than a few hours.
- Monitor for signs of disease or insects and treat accordingly.
- Protect from frost and freeze, as even cold tolerant plants can be damaged by cold when young, or during cold conditions more severe or longer duration than the average for the Zone Range.
- Prune for shape as the central trunk grows taller by trimming away growth from the bottom 1/4 to 1/3 of the trunk and any shoots that sucker up from the root system. When the trunk reaches 4 to 6 feet, then begin to lightly trim the top 3/4 to 2/3 to encourage interior branching and fullness and to shape.
- Tying the central trunk to a sturdy stake is recommended until the root system develops well enough to hold the plant securely in an upright position. Take care to re-tie every few months to avoid girding or scaring of the trunk, although most shallow wounds to a young developing trunk will heal.
- Monitor for signs of disease or insects and treat accordingly

Many tropical and subtropical plants can be grown as potted plants indefinitely, and can be successfully wintered over indoors in colder climates, so long as they are moved indoors well ahead of temps into the 30°F's, are maintained in warm environment (minimum 40°F) with adequate, full spectrum light, consistent soil moisture is maintained, and any pest or disease issue are promptly and properly addressed.

For quick answers to any growing or planting questions, just email us at [service@emeraldgoddessgardens.com](mailto:service@emeraldgoddessgardens.com).

You can check you USDA Zone by visiting our website at [emeraldgoddessgardens.com](http://emeraldgoddessgardens.com)