Barbados Gooseberry

Pereskia aculeata



Barbados Gooseberry
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 30 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9b

Other Names: Blade-apple Cactus, Leaf Cactus

Description:

A spiny, woody shrub when young, becoming a scrambling vine that will climb fences, trellises or trees; primarily grown as an ornamental, but leaves and fruit are edible; considered invasive in some areas, may overwhelm native vegetation

Ornamental Features

Barbados Gooseberry is a member of the cactus family, which are grown primarily for their characteristic shapes, their interesting features and textures, and their high tolerance for hot, dry growing environments. Like all cacti, it doesn't actually have leaves, but rather modified succulent stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to hold water for long periods of time. This particular cactus is valued for its spreading habit of growth which can occur as either a single rough stem or grow as a cluster of such stems that spread out from a central base. This plant features showy fragrant white daisy flowers with yellow eyes along the branches from late summer to early winter. It features an abundance of magnificent lime green berries from mid winter to mid spring, which fade to orange over time. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up.

This plant is primarily grown as an ornamental, but it's also valued for its edible qualities. The round sweet fruit is most often used in the following ways:

- Fresh Eating
- Preserves
- Juice-Making

Landscape Attributes

Barbados Gooseberry is a large succulent evergreen plant with a spreading habit of growth that trails along the ground. It tends to form a colony of solitary stems that spread out and away from the base. As a type of cactus, it has no true foliage; the body of the plant is wholly comprised of one or more rough stems. With age, this plant will eventually develop a woody dark gray 'trunk' at its base.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. However, secondary stems may be removed at the base to control the spread of the plant. It is a good choice for attracting birds, bees and butterflies to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Barbados Gooseberry is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Barbados Gooseberry will grow to be about 30 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. As a climbing vine, it should be planted next to a fence, trellis or other rigid structure where it can be trained to grow upwards on it. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 20 years.

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America.

Barbados Gooseberry is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its spreading habit of growth, it is ideally suited for use as a 'spiller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the edges where it can spill gracefully over the pot. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.