Native Plant of the Month

Tall Oregon Grape

Mahonia aquifolium

- Tall Oregon grape is named for its upright growth habit (3-6’) and its clusters of berries, which are often used like grapes for jams and wines. A related plant, Mahonia nervosa, is a low-growing species.

- Tall Oregon grape was collected by Lewis & Clark while in Oregon and studied by Dr. Mahone (who is recognized in the scientific name) upon their return. “Aquifolium” (water leaf) refers to the shiny leaves.

- The flowers provide nectar, the new leaves are food for deer and other mammals, and the berries are devoured by birds and animals.

Landscape Value

Tall Oregon grape has gained worldwide recognition as a premier landscape plant. Interesting from season to season, copper-colored new growth, yellow flower clusters, and edible blue berries make it a standout in the landscape.

Its spiny leaves and dense form make it a good guard plant to deter human traffic. Plant in sun to part shade in good garden soil. Plant in groups, in the shrub border, or at the base of trees.

Intersperse with oceanspray, red flowering currant, evergreen huckleberry, red elderberry, mock orange, salal, and native roses.

Text by Heidi Bohan
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