Low Oregon-Grape (*Berberis nervosa*, a.k.a. *Mahonia nervosa*)
Barberry Family

**Why Choose It?**

Upright stalks of yellow flowers brighten a shady garden starting early in March, and the deep blue berries ripen August through late fall. Easy to grow, nice looking year 'round, these plants are shaped like a bouquet. The foot-long leaves stay green all year, and they are compound—what look like holly leaves are actually the leaflets that make up the whole. This low-growing Oregon grape may be common, but second-rate it’s not.

**In the Garden**

Low Oregon Grape spreads via stems underground, making it a good ground cover and not too shabby at erosion control. Once established, it’s happy in dry shade. Try it in a woodland garden with other shade lovers, like hellebores, salal or sword fern, or as a slightly prickly barrier planting. Towhees, thrushes, and waxwings will go for the berries.

**The Facts**

Low Oregon Grape grows one to three feet tall, and if you water it well during its first two summers in your garden, it can survive even our droughtiest years. It’s happiest in shade, unlike its cousin, Tall Oregon Grape (*Berberis aquifolium*), which can handle more sun.

**Where to See It**

Low Oregon Grape thrives in woods throughout western Washington, especially in well-established second-growth forest.
And, hey, what about those “grapes”?

Birds love ‘em, and so do some people—those who find the tartness refreshing. For others, the berries are too sour unless they’re sweetened and cooked into jelly or jam. Or you can use them like grapes and ferment their juice into wine.

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

www.wnps.org
206-527-3210 or 1-888-288-8022

Native Plant Spotlight
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