PLANT FACT SHEET

Malpighia emarginata Sesse & Moc ex DC.

GENUS *Malpighia* **FAMILY** Malpighiaceae

COMMON NAMES Acerola, Barbados-cherry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit are eaten fresh and especially as juice. They are also used for jellies, preserves, desserts and toppings.

DESCRIPTION

A small tree up to 5 m tall. Branches are brittle and easily broken. The leaves are dark green and shiny. They are long and have small hairs. These hairs can irritate the skin. Flowers are on short stalks and are pink to white with five petals. Flowers are mostly on old growth. Fruit are round and cherry like. They have 3 lobes. They are usually bright red and with a thin skin. They are 1.7 cm across.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to C and S America. It has poor cold tolerance but can withstand temperatures to near freezing. It can tolerate drought. It can grow with rainfalls around 1,200-1,600 mm per year. Roots are shallow so plants cannot withstand wind. It needs a sunny position for good fruit production. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown using seed, cuttings, and grafting. Seed are not always viable and cuttings are easy and improved with rooting hormone. It can be pruned to a shrub. It does best with regular irrigation if rainfall is low. It is suited to limed soils. Boron and iron deficiency can occur if not available.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees can fruit in 2-3 years. Trees yield well for 15-20 years and can last 40 years. Flowering can occur throughout the year but flushes occur in response to rain. Fruit develop to maturity in 25 days. There are usually 3 seeds which have fluted wings. Fruit deteriorate rapidly once removed from the tree. They can only be kept 3-4 days. Frozen fruit falls apart when thawed.

NOTES

It is high in Vitamin C. Because of the high Ascorbic acid content the red colour of the fruit is reduced if fruit are stored or processed.

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