

Berberis nervosa

[Synonyms : *Berberis glumacea*, *Berberis nervosa* var. *mendocinensis*, *Mahonia glumacea*, *Mahonia nervosa*, *Mahonia nervosa* var. *mendocinensis*, *Mahonia nervosa* var. *nervosa*, *Odostemon nervosus*]

CASCADE OREGONGRAPE is an evergreen shrub. Native to north-western North America it has fragrant bright yellow flowers, then tiny, bloomy dark blue berries.

It is also known as Barberry, Cascade mahonia, Dull oregon grape, Dwarf oregon grape, Longleaf mahonia, Oregon barberry, Oregon grape, Oregon grape holly, Shiny oregon grape, and Water holly.

Nervosa is Latin (sinewy, nervous, strong) meaning ‘well developed or conspicuously veined’. The berries have been made into preserves by the North American Thompson Indians.

Both the Nitinaht and Thompson tribes obtained a yellow dye from the inner bark.

Authorities have noted that medicinal attributes were appreciated by a few North American tribes. The plant was taken by the Thompson and Nitinaht Indians as a laxative. The Thompson tribe also used it to treat blood disorders, venereal disease, eye problems and rheumatism.

The young leaves can be eaten as a cooked vegetable. The fruit, although sharp-tasting, can be eaten raw but locally are more often made into pies, jam and other preserves. They are also said to make a refreshing drink and can be used (like lemon juice) to enhance the flavour of other food.

Small birds enjoy the fruit.

Apart from a yellow dye from the inner bark, the fruit yield green and purple dyes too – and the leaves offer a green dye as well.

Authorities note that cascade oregongrape is a popular ornamental plant and is appreciated by flower arrangers.

Medicinally, like that of other close relatives herbalists have used the root to treat dysentery. It has also been used as a remedy for some blood disorders and venereal disease and to enhance digestion and appetite. A decoction of root bark has been recommended as an eyewash.