**Mahonia aquifolium** - Oregon Grapeholly (*Berberidaceae*)

*Mahonia aquifolium* is a small, evergreen, bold-textured shrub. Oregon Grapeholly has bronzed winter foliage and reddish juvenile foliage. It is one of the best broadleaf shrubs for winter bronzing if it is in a protected site.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- small shrub
- to 5' tall x 3' wide, upright oval growth habit, usually planted in groups, with several stems emerging from each plant
- slow rate

**Culture**
- does best in partial shade to full shade in moist, well-drained, acidic soils (becomes chlorotic if in alkaline soils)
- needs a protected site in winter against prevailing winds (as do all broad-leaved evergreens to avoid winter desiccation)
- does not tolerate poor drainage or full sun in winter
- Barberry Family, with several minor disease and pest problems, but most often troubled by improper placement in the landscape (see above), resulting in stunting, foliage chlorosis, and/or foliage winter burn
- moderately available in B&B or container form

**Foliage**
- emerging reddish, changing to light green, turning lustrous dark green, then becoming a deep burgundy in winter, but often subject to frequent "burning" in winter, resulting in a partially bleached appearance
- evergreen, alternate, odd-pinnately compound with 5-9 leaflets which are elliptical to ovate, spiny-dentate, and glossy

**Flowers**
- bright yellow-green, flowering in Apr., with a dense cluster of many small flowers in a terminal inflorescence
- attractive contrast to old burgundy foliage and emerging red foliage
- attracts bees

**Fruits**
- ellipsoid blue berries with a whitish cast (like Blueberries) maturing in Aug.-Sept.
- not usually persistent, if present at all

**Twigs**
- light brown, fairly stout, and somewhat irregular (numerous leaf and bud scale scars due to slow growth rate)
- small buds except for large terminal floral buds

**Trunk**
- not applicable

**USAGE**

**Function**
- foundation, entranceway, or specimen broadleaf evergreen shrub

**Texture**
- bold texture
- open density

**Assets**
- ever-changing color of green or bronzed evergreen foliage
- bright yellow flowers in spring
- occasional terminal clusters of blue berries in summer

**Liabilities**
- does poorly in alkaline and/or wet sites
- winter burning of leaves
- slow growth
- full sun intolerance
- flowers attract bees

**Habitat**
- Zone 5
- Native to Pacific Northwest in U.S. in cool, partially shaded areas of coniferous forests

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- small to medium-sized shrubs of broadleaved evergreen habit (*Buxus* hybrids, *Ilex × meserveae*, *Ligustrum japonicum*, *Rhododendron* hybrids, etc.)
- shrubs that have deeply bronzed evergreen foliage in winter (*Cotoneaster salicifolius*, *Nandina domestica 'Firepower*', etc.) or groundcovers with the same trait (*Euonymus fortunei* var. *coloratus*, *Sedum floriferum 'Weihenstephaner Gold*', etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**
- *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Compactum' - compact and slower-growing form to 3'
- *Mahonia repens* - Creeping Mahonia - a species similar to Oregon Grapeholly in its foliage, flowers, fruit, and hardness, but differing in its short height (to 1'), stoloniferous habit (creating numerous basal stems over time), and trailing appearance, used as a non-traditional, bold-textured groundcover