

# HomeGrown Herbalist

## *School of Botanical Medicine*



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Dr. Patrick Jones

[HomeGrownHerbalist.net](http://HomeGrownHerbalist.net)

# Barberry & Oregon Grape

## Plant Monograph

*Dr. Patrick Jones*



**Warning!**  
**Do Not take Barberry Or Oregon Grape  
If You're Pregnant Or Nursing.**

I'm not saying this because I always say it...I'm saying it because the berberine in these plants is very dangerous to unborn and nursing children.



# **Contraindications For Barberry & Oregon Grape**

**Don't combine with pharmaceuticals**

**Don't take if you are diabetic and on meds**

**Don't take during pregnancy or lactation**

**Don't use in small children**

**Don't take with kidney disease**

**May Exacerbate Reynaud's Syndrome symptoms**

**Don't take if there are bile duct obstructions**

**Don't take if you are a man trying to get your wife pregnant**

**Don't take these plants long term**

# Barberry, Oregon Grape & Pharmaceuticals

Barberry and Oregon grape stimulate and enhance the liver's ability to remove toxins from the body. As a result, they can significantly decrease the absorption and effectiveness of medicines.

**Take-Home Message:** If you're going to take pharmaceuticals, don't take barberry or Oregon grape.





# Barberry

**Common Names:** Barberry, Palo Amarillo, Pipperidge bush

**Medicinal Parts:** Root, flowers, berries

## Constituents:

Berberine (plant 10,000-30,000 ppm); calcium (root 19,100,ppm); potassium (root 4,370 ppm); magnesium (root 1,430 ppm); berbamine (plant); berberubine (plant); chelidonic acid (plant); columbamine (plant); columbianine (plant); hydrastine (plant); isotetrandrine (plant); jatrorrhizine (plant); magnoflorine (plant); oxyacanthine (plant); palmatine (plant); vulvracine (plant); yatroricine (plant); zeaxanthin (plant).



# Barberry

## Taxonomy:

Kingdom: Plantae

Clade: Angiosperms

Clade: Eudicots

Order: Ranunculales

Family: Berberidaceae

Genus: *Berberis*

Species: *Berberis vulgaris*

*Berberis vulgaris* is the most commonly seen species in the herb trade but there are a number of other species in the wild that are similarly medicinal.



# Barberry

## Description:

A perennial shrub with green to purplish-red leaves and spines on the stems. The smooth leaves are oblong to oval shaped. The leaves come off the stems in little clusters each of which will also have three or five thorns.

The flowers are bright yellow, and turn into small scarlet, berries that droop from one side of the stems.

The roots and lower stems are distinctly yellow due to the berberine content.

Barberry is a common ornamental shrub and is often available at nurseries.



# Barberry & Oregon Grape Are Cousins

Botanists have recently split off a group of plants from the *Berberis* genus to form a new genus called *Mahonia*. These plants (including Oregon Grape) are medicinally identical to Barberry.



# Oregon Grape

**Common Names:** Holly Grape, Rocky Mountain Grape Root, Creeping Barberry, Yerba de Sangre, Algerita

**Medicinal Parts:** Root, Flower

## Constituents:

Berbamine (root); berberine (root); canadine (plant); columbamine (plant); corydine (plant); corypalmine (plant); corytuberine (plant); hydrastine (root); isoboldine (plant); isocorydine (plant); jatrorrhizine (plant); magnoflorine (plant); mahonine (plant); oxyacanthine (root); palmatine (plant); resin (plant); tannin (plant); tetrahydroberberine (plant); tetrahydrojatrorrhizine (plant). (*Malvonia repens*): Berberine (root, stem 1,417 ppm); (+) iso corydine (leaf 1,081 ppm); (+) corydine (leaf 540 ppm); syringaresinol (root, stem 85 ppm); (+) glaucine (leaf 55 ppm); obamegine (root, stem 35 ppm); columbamine (root, stem 28 ppm); obaberine (root, stem 25 ppm); thaliporphine (root, stem 22 ppm); thalrugosine (root, stem 15 ppm); jatrorrhizine (root, stem); magnoflorine (root, stem); oxyacanthine (root, stem); palmatine (root, stem).

# Oregon Grape

## Taxonomy:

Kingdom: Plantae

Clade: Angiosperms

Clade: Eudicots

Order: Ranunculales

Family: Berberidaceae

Genus: *Mahonia*

Species: *Mahonia* spp.

*Mahonia repens* and *Mahonia aquifolium* are the most commonly seen species in the herb trade but there are a number of other species in the wild that are similarly medicinal.

*Mahonia aquifolium* is a common ornamental and is often available at nurseries.



# Oregon Grape



*Mahonia repens*



*Mahonia aquifolium*

# Oregon Grape

## Description:

A perennial plant with green, pinnate leaves that typically have small spines on their margins (like holly). Unlike its cousin barberry, Oregon grape does not have spines on the stems. *Mahonia repens* (and a number of similar species) tends to hug the ground like an ivy. Its leaves are dull green and have a matte finish. The leaves of *M. repens* also tend to redden at times particularly in the fall. *Mahonia aquifolium* is a more upright, shrub with glossy bright green leaves. Both species have yellow flowers and blue berries.

Algerita (*M. trifoliata* and a few other algeritas) has red berries.

The roots, stems and branches are distinctly yellow inside (and sometimes outside) due to the berberine content.





# Algerita



Algerita (*M. trifoliata* and a few other algeritas) has red berries.

# Veterinary Applications

*Barberry* and Oregon Grape are safe for use in dogs and cats. Use them for the same issues for which you'd use them in humans. It is virtually impossible to get cats to take either voluntarily.

The same contraindications apply as well.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

**Preparation & Dosage:** Standard infusion of 1 tsp dried root 2-3 times daily. Tincture 40-50% ethanol 1:5 ratio. Adult dose 10-30 drops 2-3 times daily.

**Edible Parts:** The berries range from being delightfully tart to being so sour that they'll pucker you up for a week. While this may be a good strategy if you're opening a kissing booth, it's not that great for a dessert topping. The berries make a nice jelly (as do most things when mixed with lots of sugar).

**Energy/Flavor:** Cool, yin, bitter

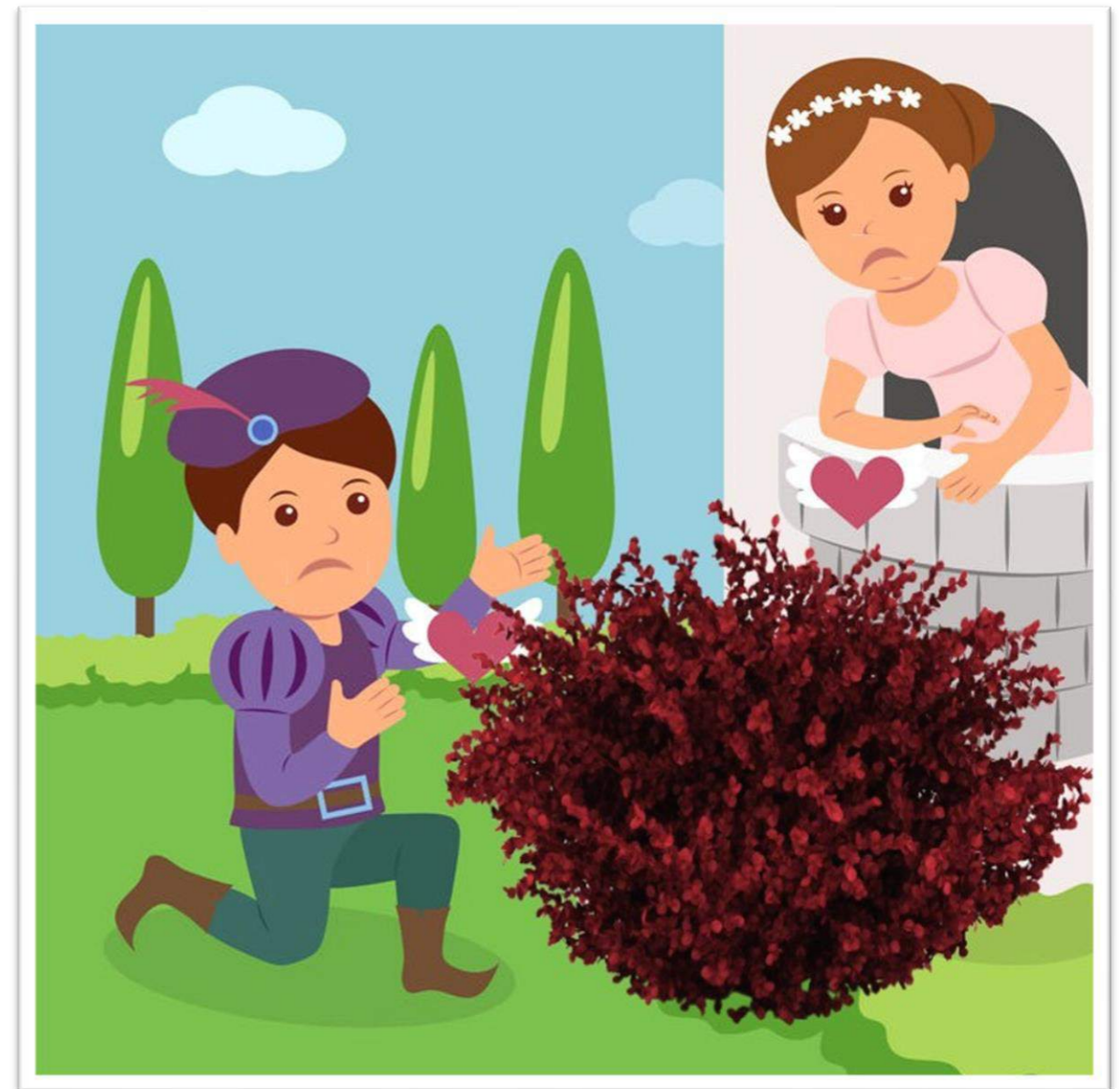


# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## Cultivation:

Barberry and Oregon grape bushes are easy to grow and are often used as ornamentals. In my experience here in Idaho barberry doesn't tend to be as long lived as most shrubs. Your mileage may vary.

I've found Barberry to be particularly useful for planting under the bedroom windows of teenage daughters. I think if the Capulets had planted some barberry under Juliet's balcony, they'd have had much less trouble with that Montague boy.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## Harvesting:

The roots are harvested in the autumn or early winter or in early spring. They can be used fresh or dried.

Wash the roots and dry them. Cut them into small pieces before drying or you'll have a heck of a time grinding them in your blender.

The dried roots can be very hard. Check your blender blades after each grinding to make sure there aren't metal shards in your herb.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## Distribution:

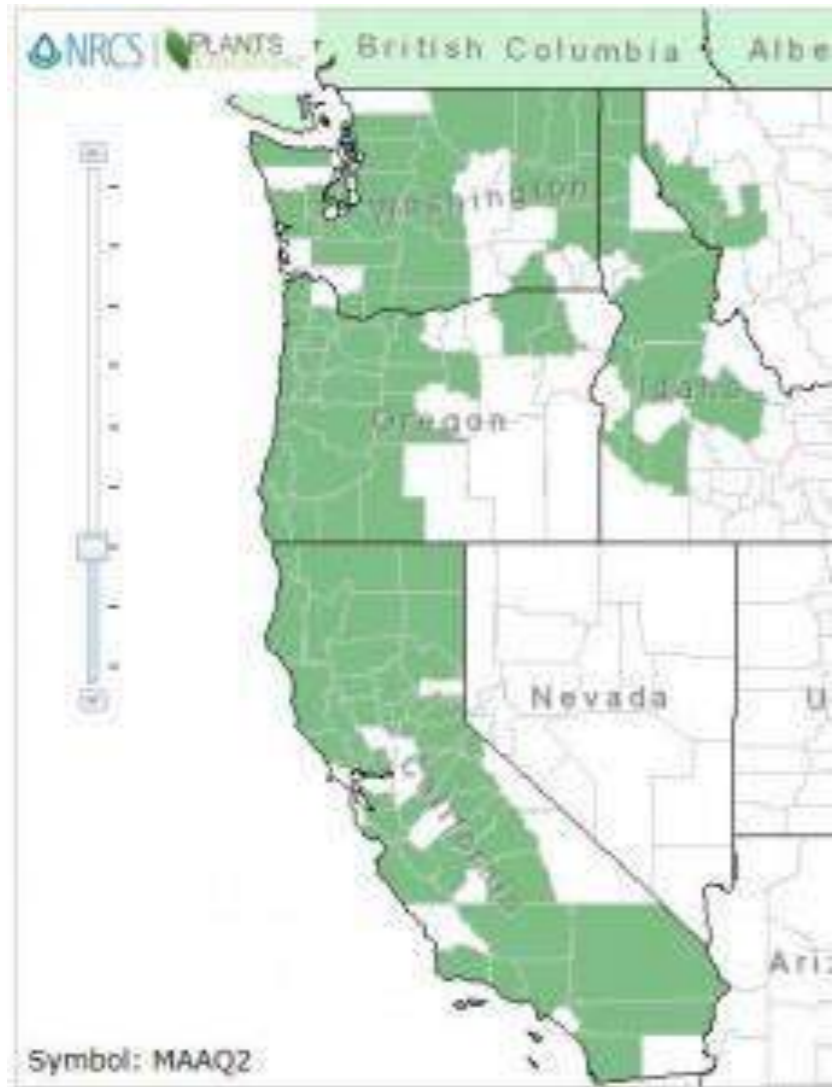
Native barberry species are common in the temperate and subtropical regions of every continent but Australia. I'm not sure why the Australians are being snooty about it. They do have plenty of imported barberry. Thus, the best place to harvest barberry in Australia is at government buildings and shopping malls.

Oregon grape grows in the Western United States. *Mahonia aquifolium* is a common ornamental shrub.

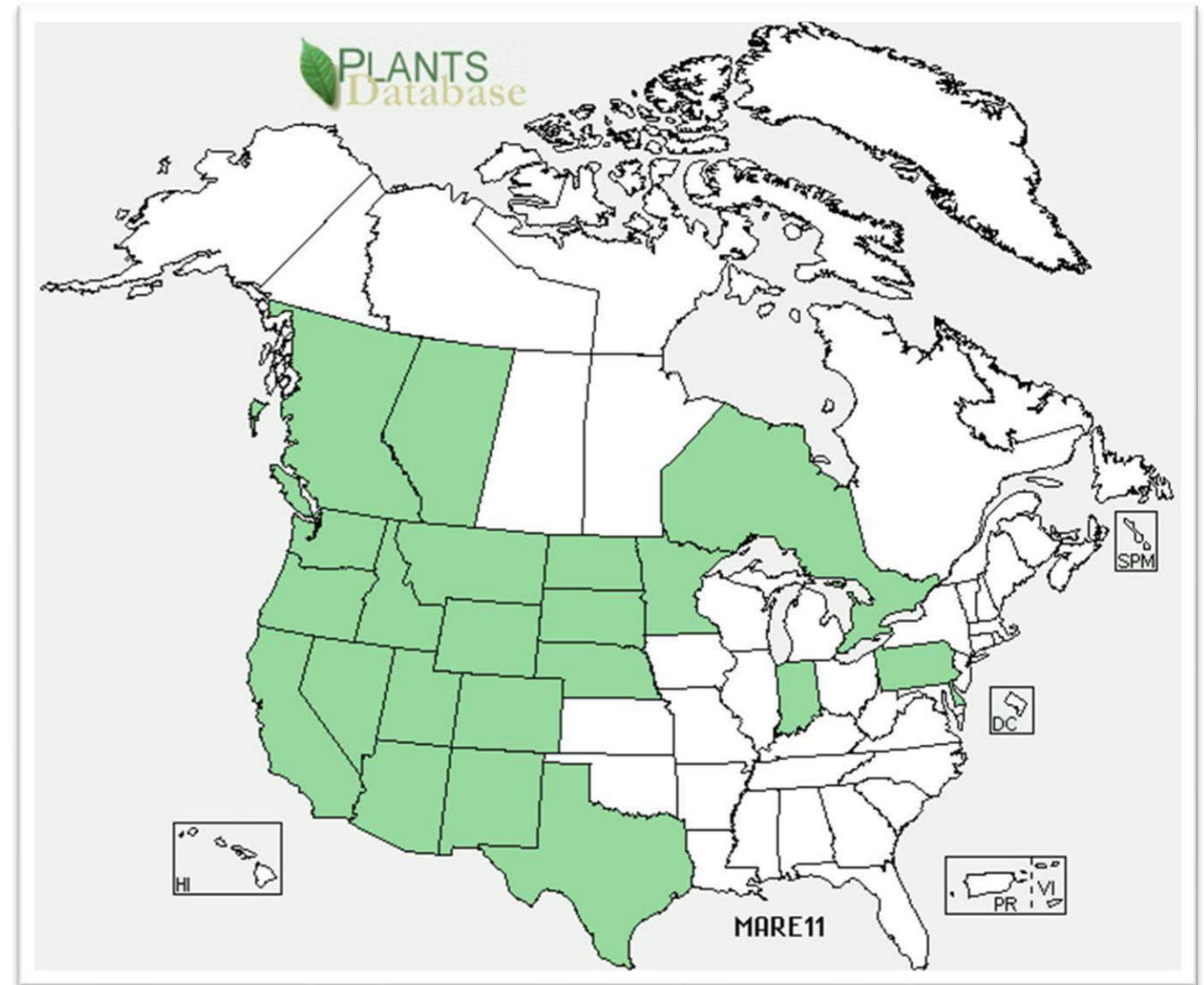


# Oregon Grape Distribution

Oregon grape species can be found throughout the Western United States. Algerita tends to favor the Southern regions like Texas.



*Distribution of Mahonia aquifolium  
from USDA Plants Database*



*Mahonia repens* Distribution  
Distribution Map courtesy of USDA NRCS Plants Database

# Etymology

The genus name *Berberis* is the Latinized version of the Arabic word for the fruits of the plant. The species name *vulgaris* means *common*.

*Mahonia* was named for American botanist Bernard McMahon (1765-1816), a friend of Thomas Jefferson who ran a successful nursery and botanical garden in Philadelphia where he cultivated previously undescribed plant species collected by the Lewis and Clark expedition.

*Repens* means *flowing like a river*. *Aquifolium* means *spiny leaves*.



Bernard McMahon (1765-1816)



# Using Barberry & Oregon Grape

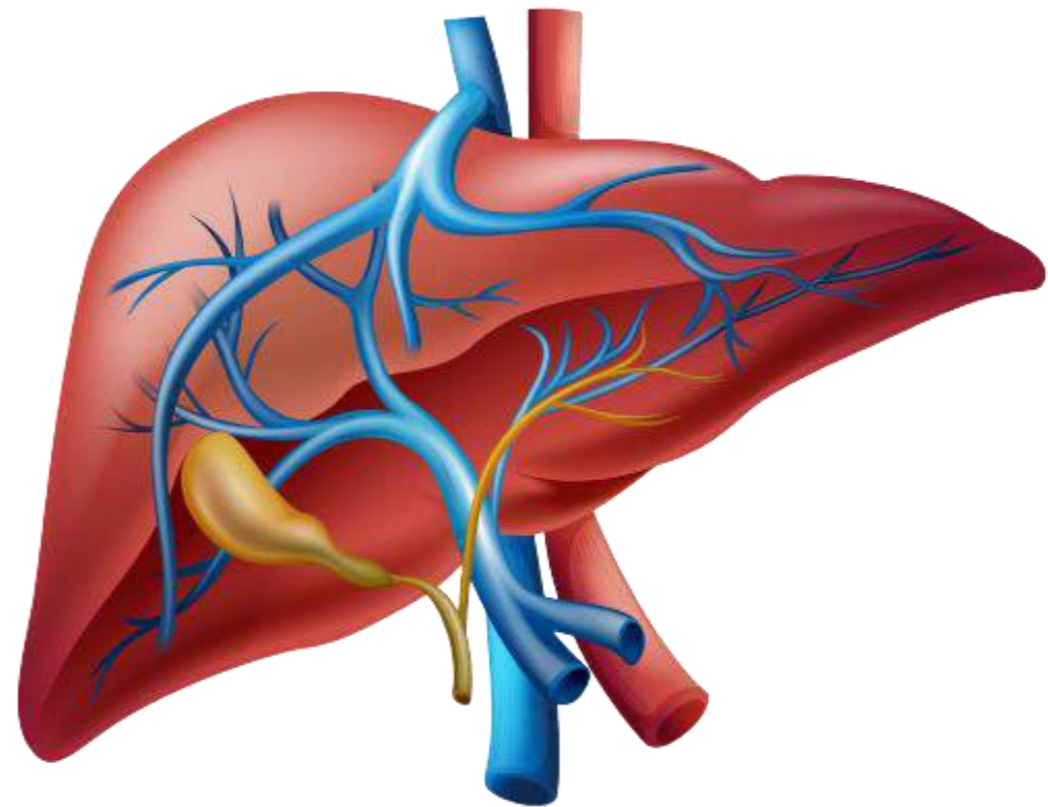


# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## *The Liver*

Barberry and Oregon grape are very effective liver tonics. They improve and increase bile flow. I've used them with good success in jaundice cases in my veterinary practice and in adults in my naturopathy practice.

Barberry and Oregon grape should not be used in infants and can actually increase infant jaundice. So, for baby jaundice, do something else.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## *Fevers*

Barberry and Oregon grape are effective anti-pyretics (the funky herbalist word for plants that lower fevers).



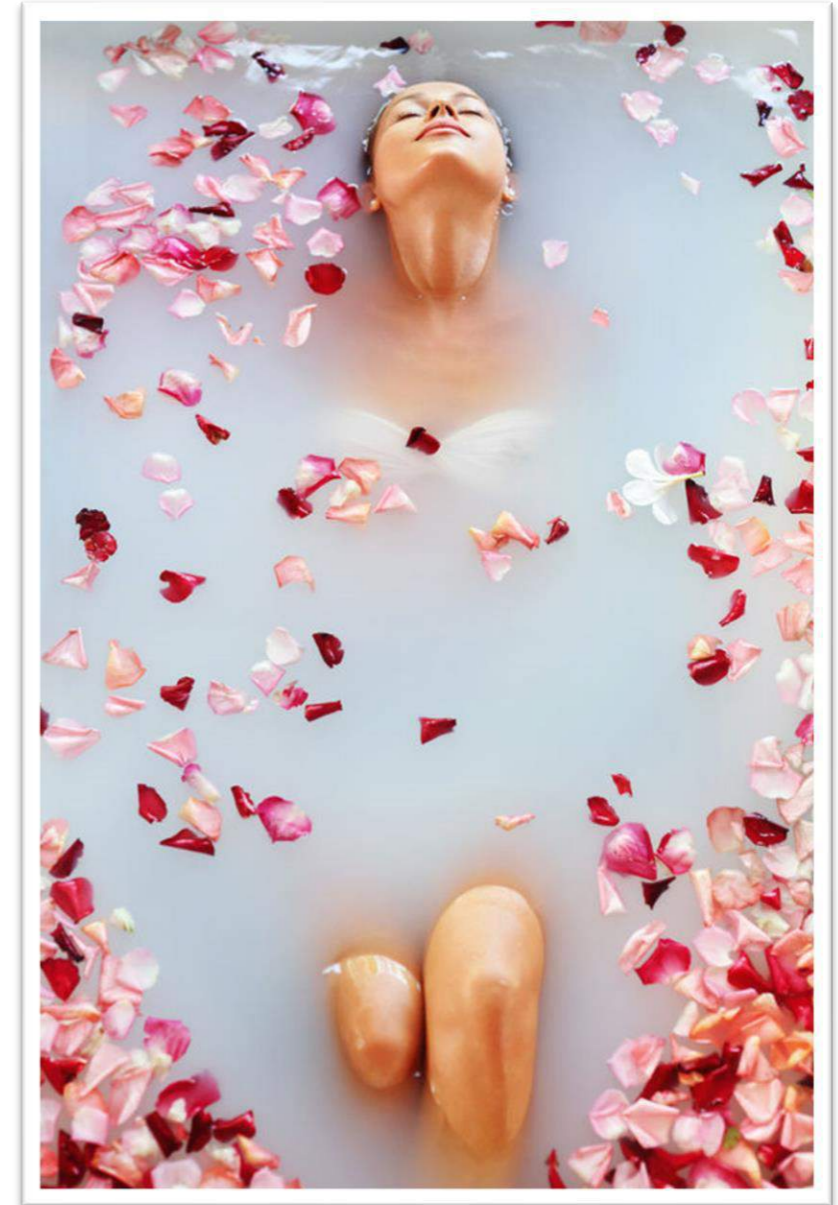
# Barberry and Oregon Grape Allergies

Both plants can also be helpful in allergy cases. The liver is the principal organ responsible for elimination of histamines from the blood. Since histamines are the principal cause of many allergic symptoms, removing them more quickly is often helpful in decreasing the severity and duration of allergic symptoms.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape Blood Purifier & Detoxifiers

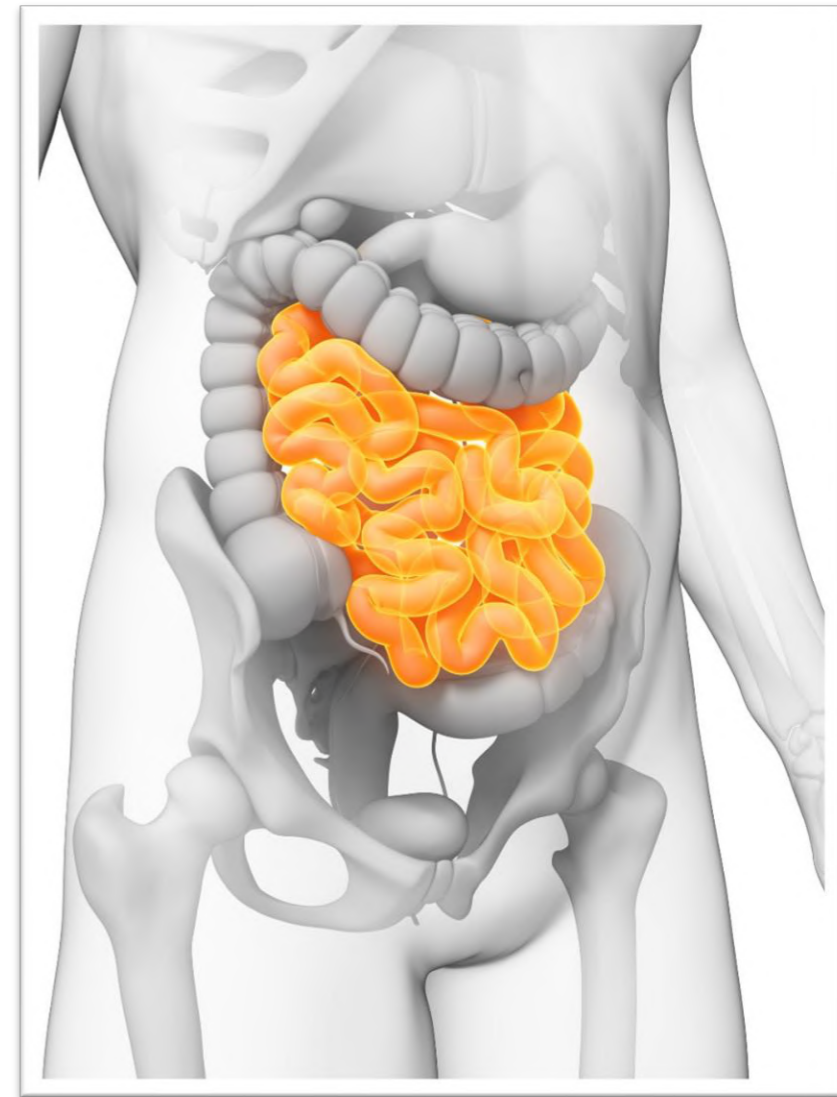
Because the liver is the principal detoxifying organ of the body, barberry is useful as a blood purifier. This has good applications in cancer cases



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## The Intestines

Because they stimulate bile flow, barberry and Oregon grape act as effective laxatives. They also improve digestion and calm inflammations of the intestinal and stomach mucosa. They also strengthen and tone the intestines and can be useful in cases of digestive weakness or ulcerations of the gut.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape Stomach Bitters

Stomach bitters are, essentially, herbs that taste really bad. Barberry and Oregon grape excel at this. The taste stimulates increased amylase, bicarbonate and saliva production as an attempt by the mouth to apologize to the stomach for sending down such awful stuff. The result is improved digestion.

Stomach bitters are taken about 30 minutes before eating.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape Eczema & Psoriasis

They are also good topically and internally for eczema and psoriasis; topically for the antibiotic effect and internally as liver tonics. Almost all psoriasis and eczema cases have a grumpy liver as the primary causative issue.

Oregon grape and barberry are useful parts of tonic formulas for people with dry skin or scalp, sugar cravings or an inability to sweat when physically active or feverish.





# Barberry & Oregon Grape For Wounds

The anti-bacterial properties can also be used for wound poultices. The flowers have long been used for this.

The fruits, flowers or roots of barberry or Oregon grape can also be used as an antibacterial skin wash for dermatitis cases or infections.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## The mouth

Barberry and Oregon grape are useful for gum inflammations. The flowers and berries work well for this. Both taste better than the root (which would also work).

Make a tea and swish it around.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape Hangovers

These plants are also an effective treatment for hangovers. This may be due to the liver stimulant effects detoxifying the blood, or it may just be because the cure tastes so bad that people decide to quit drinking.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## *Bacteria*

Barberry and Oregon grape are effective antibiotics with a broad spectrum of activity against both gram-negative bacteria including *E. coli* and *Aerobacter*, *Klebsiella*, *Proteus*, *Pseudomonas*, *Shigella*, and *Vibrio* species, as well as many gram-positive bacteria such as *Staph.* and *Strep.*

They're often very good for *E. coli* diarrhea.

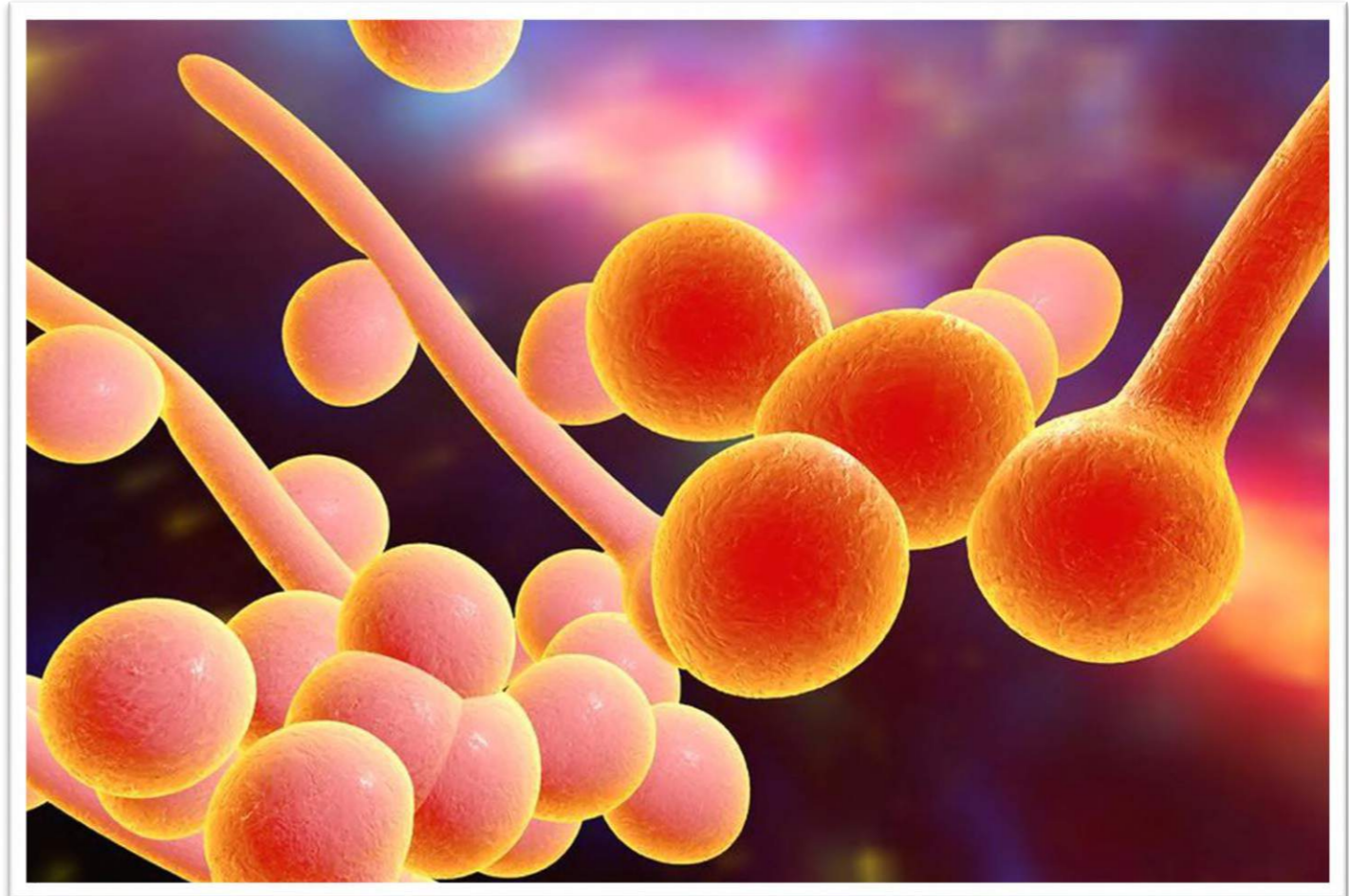
Barberry and Oregon Grape also diminish the drug resistance of many newer strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## *Candida*

Barberry and Oregon grape are also effective topically or internally against *Candida* infections and can be an effective part of *Candida* cleansing protocols.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape *Amoebiasis*

They can sometimes be helpful in amoebic dysentery cases. It works better in low-level infections than in major ones. They can be helpful against other entamoeba infections as well.

These kinds of bugs can cause serious consequences for the liver and even the lungs if they aren't killed so, if the Barberry or Oregon grape isn't doing the trick, find a god pharmaceutical that will.



Stefan Walkowski, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

# Barberry and Oregon Grape *PMS*

Barberry and Oregon grape can help with PMS. Especially when combined with Dong Quai and/or chaste tree berry.

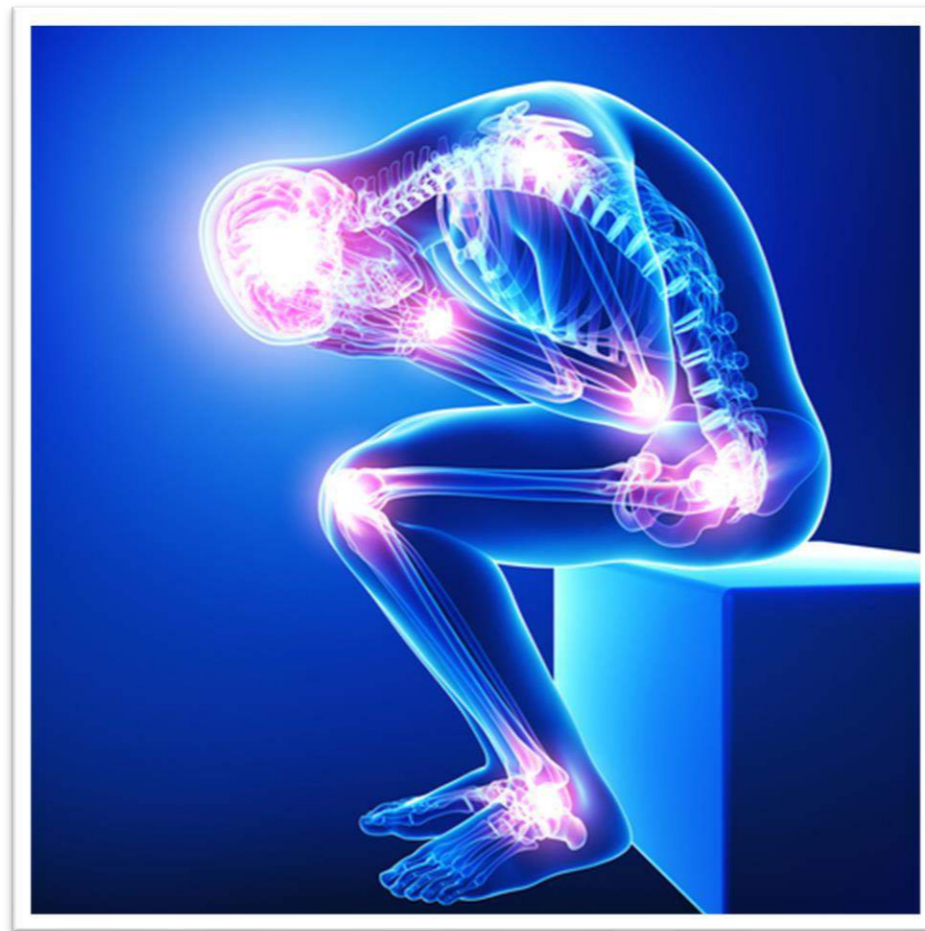
Take a formula of equal parts of all three times a day for a week before menses.



# Barberry and Oregon Grape

## *As Antioxidants*

Barberry and Oregon grape are antioxidants and protect the body from rancid lipids and the metabolic stress caused by lipid free radicals. These free radicals are often implicated in chronic autoimmune cases and allergic inflammation.





# Barberry and Oregon Grape *Arthritis*

Barberry and Oregon grape can help with arthritis and other inflammation. Part of this is due to its blood cleansing, liver tonic activities. Part is also due to some direct anti-inflammatory effects.

Since long-term use of barberry and Oregon grape is inadvisable, burdock would be a better choice for this.



# How is Oregon Grape Different?

Oregon grape has a mild stimulatory effect on the thyroid gland that barberry lacks.

Oregon grape seems to be a little more effective if the liver issues being addressed are of a chronic nature.

Oregon grape is also slightly more effective topically against *Staph.* infections.



# Shameless Commercial Announcement

Click Here for:

[\*Doc's Oregon Grape Formulas\*](#)

[\*Barberry\*](#)



# The HomeGrown Herbalist School of Botanical Medicine



Yup, You Want to Enroll!  
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# Thanks For Listening!



Dr. Patrick Jones & Carl The Herb Hound

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