

Oregon Grape Jelly

By Dr. Ty Harrison, Westminster College Biology Department Emeritus Professor

Creeping Oregon Grape (*Mahonia repens*) is an attractive, drought tolerant, native shrub which is increasingly being used as a landscape ground-cover plant here in northern Utah. It has been planted around several Westminster buildings such as Giovale Library and Malouf Hall. Other native shrubs which have edible fruits such as Saskatoon Service Berry and Chokecherry have also been planted on Westminster campus and along Emigration Creek. These native shrubs have important value for both humans and wildlife, especially birds.

The Creeping Oregon Grape plants on campus are old enough now to provide enough fruit to be harvested and made into tasty jams and jellies. The berries contain large amounts of purple anthocyanin, an important anti-oxidant pigment. Extracts of the stems and roots contain the chemical berberidine which has been used by Native Americans and others as an important medicine.

The small, purple fruits look like grapes but they are quite sour like cranberries and can be treated similarly in recipes for relishes and jellies. On October 29, 2005 I picked approximately 4 pounds of Creeping Oregon Grape berries from the west side of Malouf Hall and made twelve, 8-ounce jars of jelly using the following recipe:

Four cups of Oregon Grape juice are prepared by covering several pounds of cleaned and washed berries with water, simmering for 20-30 minutes, mashing gently and then filtering through multiple layers of damp cheese cloth or a jelly bag. One package of powdered pectin is dissolved in four measured cups of juice and with continuous gentle stirring brought to a rolling boil for one minute under high heat. Four cups of sugar are added and brought back to a full rolling boil for two minutes. Remove from heat. Skim any foam from the top, pour into hot, sterilized jelly jars and seal with conventional canning lids and rings.

Extract juice by simmering berries with enough water to cover them for 20-30 minutes. Mash and filter through several layers of wet cheesecloth or a jelly bag. Mix exactly four cups of juice (add water if necessary) with one package of commercial pectin and bring to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Boil one minute. Add 4 cups of sugar and bring back to a full boil with constant stirring. Boil 2 minutes. Remove from heat, skim, and pour into sterilized 8 ounce canning jars with lids which seal tightly.

(see over for drawing and distribution)



Creeping Mahonia - Mahonia repens

