

Perfumed cherry

Prunus mahaleb

Description

Plant produces a toxin called hydrogen cyanide, which is mainly found in the leaves and seed. Grown mainly for its fragrant flowers and wood.

Habit

Deciduous tree or large shrub growing up to 29 feet in height and 29 feet across.

Leaves

Simple, alternate and toothed. Green in color and small (2.5-5 cm long) and nearly as wide as long, at least some of them appearing nearly round.

Stems

Grey-brown in color with conspicuous lenticels on young stems, and shallowly fissured on old trunks. Stems lack thorns.

Flowers

Fragrant, pure white, small (8-20 mm in diameter), with an 8-15 mm pedicel. Flowers appear in an inflorescence that typically has





fewer than 10 flowers in a raceme.

Fruits and Seeds

Small thin-fleshed cherry-like drupe 8-10 mm in diameter, green at first turning red then dark purple to black when mature, with a very bitter flavor; flowering occurs mid spring with the fruit ripening in mid to late summer.

Habitat

Native to the Mediterranean, Iran and parts of Central Asia. Found in moist forests, river banks, roadsides, fields, thickets, dump sites and railroads.

Reproduction

By seed

Similar

The combination of its light green, broadly ovate to rotund and lustrous leaves, along with the extremely fragrant flowers and small black fruits help distinguish it from native *Prunus* species (*Prunus* spp.).

Credits

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