

## 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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