Oregon Grape Holly (Mahonia)  
(*Mahonia aquifolium*)

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

**Summary:**
- Foliage: Evergreen broadleaf
- Height: 3 to 9 feet (depending on form)
- Spread: 5 feet
- Shape: Upright, cane growth (very little side branching)

Oregon grape holly is a slow-growing, medium to large evergreen shrub with lustrous foliage and bright yellow flowers in spring which are followed by robin egg blue fruit in summer.

**Plant Needs:**
- Zone: 6 to 8
- Light: Partial shade to full shade
- Moisture: Moist to average
- Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay
- pH Range: 3.5 to 7.0

**Functions:**
Suggested uses for this plant include border, massing, and foundation plant.

**Planting Notes:**
Oregon grape holly must have shade during hot summer afternoons and protection from winter winds. Thus, planting on the east side of a house (within shade pattern) is ideal.

**Care:**
Easy to maintain.

**Problems:**
No serious pests.

**Alternatives:**
Consult local garden centers, including historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

**Cultivars:**
- 'Compactum' is a low-growing cultivar (3 feet tall) with glossy foliage.
- Related species:
  - Leatherleaf mahonia (*Mahonia bealei*) has the same aesthetic and cultural requirements as Oregon grape holly. However, it has a more coarse texture due to its larger and stiff-pointed leaves.
  - There are reports of leatherleaf mahonia invading southern woodlands.
Comments:
There are two forms of Oregongrapeholly in the nursery trade. One is a tall upright open form and the other is a more compact low-growing form. In both species (Oregongrapeholly and Leatherleaf), leaves are held stiffly horizontal on the shrub, making it an interesting specimen. Because of this tiered effect that mimics a pagoda, these species are commonly used in Asian gardens.

This material was developed by Carol Ness as part of the Interactive Design and Development Project funded by the Kellogg Foundation.