

Weeds in the Garden

Japanese Barberry

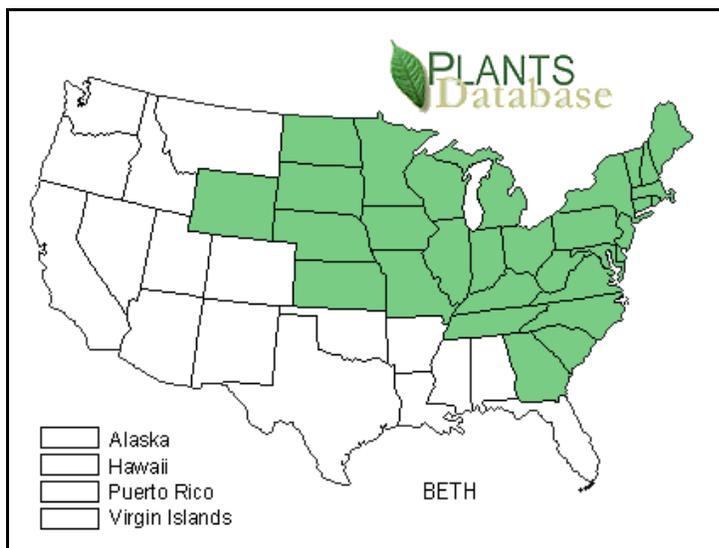
Common Name: Japanese barberry

Scientific Name: *Berberis thunbergii*

Characteristics: Japanese barberry is a compact, spiny shrub that reaches two to six feet tall. Leaves are entire and smooth. The oval clusters are bunched close to the stem and the leaves are semi-evergreen. Branches have spines with a small leaf bunch at the base of each spine. It blooms in May with either solitary flowers or two to three in a bunch or umbrel. Flowers are yellow and about 1/3 inch long. Bright red fruits ripen in summer and remain on the branch into the winter.



Current Range: Japanese barberry is found from Nova Scotia to North Carolina and west to Montana.



Origin: Japanese barberry was introduced from Japan around 1875. It was, and is still widely used as an ornamental shrub. It has also been used for erosion control and as a wildlife food.

“Look Alikes”: European (or common barberry) is also an invasive non-native. Its leaves are spiny and toothed. It can be identified by its many-flowered raceme.

Habitat: Japanese barberry grows in thickets and old pastures. It also grows under closed canopy forests where it can form dense stands. It can grow in a wide variety of habitats, from lowland forests to roadsides and waste places.

The Problem: Like many invasive plants, Japanese barberry has a number of survival strategies that make it tough and aggressive. It is shade and drought resistant and its branches root wherever they touch the ground. Birds or rabbits often eat its fruits and disperse the seeds in their droppings. Ruffed grouse are particularly partial to its fruits. It is a prolific seed producer and its seed germination rate is as high as 90%. Deer avoid browsing on barberry, adding to its competitive edge.

Solutions:

Prevention – Education and citizen awareness can play a huge role in controlling this exotic species. Gardeners and landscapers can slow its spread by eliminating its use in yards and gardens. Plants already in cultivation can be removed and destroyed.

Mechanical – Hoeing or digging out individual plants can work well in areas where there are few plants. All connected roots must be removed. Fire can be an effective tool in fire-adapted environments.

Chemical – Herbicides are suggested only for areas which can not be treated mechanically. Triclopyr may be used on cut stumps. Herbicides for brush control, such as Glyphosphate, can be used, but may also impact native species. Prior to use of chemical herbicides, it is important to consult with local natural resource staff to determine which herbicides would be the most effective and would have the least impact on native species. It is essential to follow safety instructions on the selected product.

**For more information please contact the
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