



Japanese Barberry

Berberis thunbergii

WHY Should I Care?

- ◇ Japanese Barberry is a common horticultural plant that commonly escapes from cultivation
- ◇ Other understory species can be shaded out as plant forms dense stands
- ◇ Research suggests Japanese Barberry can change soil chemistry



HOW Do I Identify It?



Leaves are oval to spoon shaped and clustered in tight bunches on spiny stems; plant leafs out early in the spring; leaves green in summer and turn red to purplish in the fall



Flowers are yellow, stalked and single or in small clusters of 2-4 blossoms that bloom in May; red, egg-shaped berries remain on stems into winter

Japanese Barberry is a deciduous shrub that reaches 2-3' tall.



WHAT Might I Confuse it with?



American Barberry, *Berberis canadensis*, also not native to Michigan, has toothed leaves and usually three pronged spines.



WHEN & Where Will I See It?

- ◇ Woodland edges, open woods, roadsides, stream banks, old fields
- ◇ Tolerates a range of growing conditions; can establish under a forest canopy
- ◇ Reproduces by seed, through creeping roots and branches can root freely where they touch the ground
- ◇ Seeds are often dispersed by birds, deer, turkey, and grouse

WHAT Can I Do About It?

1. Assess your site.

- ◇ How much area does the plant cover?
- ◇ How dense is it? Has it displaced all the other vegetation where it grows?
- ◇ Are there desirable plants that you don't want to harm?
- ◇ How long has the plant been at the site? If it has been there for many years, there are likely a lot of seeds dormant in the soil and it may take much longer to control the plant

Come up with a strategy for control before you start.

2. Know Your Enemy: Control Do's and Don'ts for Japanese Barberry

- ◇ Monitor sunny open sites and edges in spring when barberry leafs out before native shrubs; identify high quality areas and begin control efforts there (target outliers first, then work your way to main populations)
- ◇ Wear heavy gloves to protect your hands from spines
- ◇ How to control:
 - Manual– for small infestations, pull or dig plants to remove entire root and remove plants from site (bagged and properly disposed of). Target mature shrubs that provide a source of seed. In old fields, regular mowing may be effective once large plants are removed.
 - Chemical– apply herbicide to cut stumps; foliar treatment can be used in areas with few native plants
 - Other– controlled burns in fire-adapted plant communities will likely control it

3. Cultivate Your Friends: Restoration Alternatives

Invasive plants will tend to regrow where the soil has been disturbed or removal of invasive plants has left open ground. Here are some native alternatives to Japanese barberry: ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*), winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), and blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.).

For More Information, please contact:

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The following resources will provide more information:

A Field Identification Guide to Invasive Plants in Michigan's Natural Communities

Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to Their Identification and Control

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