

## Japanese barberry

### *Berberis thunbergii*

#### Description

Barberry is a common horticultural species and frequently escapes from cultivation; deer herbivory minimal. The non-native common barberry (*B. vulgaris*) is also invasive but was eradicated from large parts of its range in the early twentieth century as it is a host to black stem grain rust.

#### Habit

Spiny, deciduous shrub; typically 0.5-1 m (2-3 ft) tall.

#### Leaves

Simple, alternate, oval to spoon shaped with smooth margins, 1.3-2 cm (0.5-0.75 in) long; bright green above, lighter below, in clusters at each node, red to purple in the fall depending on





the cultivar.

### **Stems**

Numerous; spiny; slightly curving; older stems gray; twigs and young stems turning reddish brown in winter; inner bark yellow.

### **Flowers**

Small, yellow in color, 6 petals, stalked, single or in small clusters of 2-4 blossoms; blooms April through May.

### **Fruits and Seeds**

Small, bright red, egg-shaped berries found singly or in clusters on slender stalks; mature in midsummer; remain on stems into winter; often dispersed by birds, deer, turkey and grouse. Some cultivars appear to produce little or no fruit.

### **Habitat**

Found along woodland edges, open woods, roadsides, stream banks, old fields; tolerates a range of soil, moisture and light conditions; can establish under forest canopy.

### **Reproduction**

By seed, creeping roots and cut stumps; branches root freely where they touch the ground.

### **Similar**

American barberry (*B. canadensis*) has toothed leaves and usually three pronged spines.

### **Monitoring and Rapid Response**

Monitor sunny open sites and edges in spring when barberry leafs out before native shrubs. Begin control efforts in highest quality areas; hand pull or dig young plants, removing all roots. Target mature shrubs that provide a source of seed; cutting effective when cut stumps are treated with herbicide; foliar herbicide treatment is effective in areas with few native plants. In fire-adapted communities, late spring burns with good fuel may kill seedlings.

### **Credits**

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