

# JAPANESE BARBERRY

(*Berberis thunbergii*)

Japanese barberry is very shade-tolerant and **can grow almost anywhere**, outcompeting natives for sunlight, nutrients and space. The plant also changes the soil chemistry around it, promoting its own growth as well as that of other invasives, and **inhibiting the growth of native species**. Deer avoid Japanese barberry, giving it another competitive advantage over native species.

## IDENTIFY

JAPANESE BARBERRY | James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



### CHARACTERISTICS

Japanese barberry is a deciduous shrub that can reach 2–8 feet in height. It has woody branches with deep grooves and sharp spines. Leaves are small ovals that can be green, blue-green or reddish purple. The flowers are pale yellow and hang in groups of 2–4 along the branch and appear from mid-April to May. The shrub's fruit are red, oblong berries that mature in late summer and early fall, and persist through the winter. The seeds have a high germination rate and are dispersed by birds and small mammals. Japanese barberry reproduces by seed as well as through vegetative means. It is easy to identify in early spring as it leafs out before most other plants.

### WHERE FROM

A native of Japan and Eastern Asia, Japanese barberry was first introduced to the United States in Boston, Massachusetts in 1875. It was then cultivated into an ornamental and is still widely planted in home gardens.



JAPANESE BARBERRY FLOWERS  
Leslie J. Mehrhoff,  
University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

### WHERE FOUND

Japanese barberry is considered invasive in 20 states in the U.S. It successfully grows in habitats ranging from open fields and pasture to the forest floor.



JAPANESE BARBERRY FOLIAGE  
Brandywine Conservancy



JAPANESE BARBERRY FRUITS  
Leslie J. Mehrhoff,  
University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



JAPANESE BARBERRY FOLIAGE  
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## CONTROL

### CHEMICAL METHOD

The systemic herbicide glyphosate (e.g., *Roundup*) is effective in controlling Japanese barberry. Apply a 2% glyphosate solution mixed with a surfactant to the leaves of the plant during the fall. For larger plants, *Garlon* or glyphosphate can be applied directly to cut stumps.

### MANUAL METHOD

Wear thick gloves and pull small plants when soil is moist to help remove the complete root system, as the plant can regrow from root fragments. Mowing or cutting is also an effective means of curbing barberry's spread, but it will not completely eradicate the plant.

## REMEMBER

When removing, **be careful** not to remove or destroy desirable species.

Once eradicated, be sure to replant the area with native species.

*(Read and follow all herbicide labels carefully before use.)*