United States Department of Agriculture

INVASIVE SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEET

Japanese Barberry

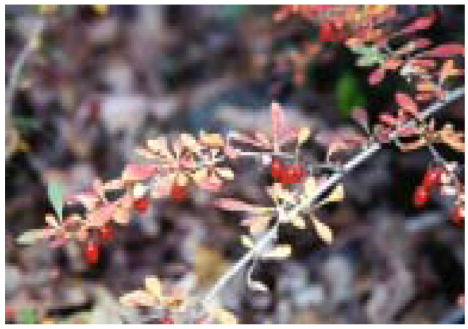
Berberis thunbergii DC.

-dense **shrub** with dry, **bright red berries** remaining after leaves fall
-ridged twigs have **slender spines** below bundles of leaves
-yellow-colored **inner bark** on branches and roots.
-flowers yellow, less than 1/2" wide; found **along branches**; early Spring
-leaves in alternate clusters; entire (*have smooth margins*); 1/2" to 1 1/2" long
-fall color is varying shades of yellow, orange, red, purplish

All Barberries in New England are **non-native**. **Japanese Barberry** is the **frequently-seen species**. It includes many horticultural varieties. The less-frequent Common Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris* L.) is common in Europe. A hybrid between the two has been reported (*Berberis* x *ottawensis*). In the Southeast USA, there is also a native Barberry (*Berberis canadensis* [not found in Canada, nor in New England]*)* with notched petals and toothed leaves. All these *Berberis* species have spiny stems, bright red berries, and yellow inner bark.

Leaf margins and flower grouping help distinguish among the New England species. (Unforked spines are typical, but not reliable for distinguishing Japanese Barberry.) **Japanese Barberry** has (usually) **smooth leaf margins** and **flowers** growing **alone or** in **umbels (**with stems growing from a single point**)**. Common Barberry flowers are in racemes (branching off a stalk) and the leaf edges may be bristle-toothed. The hybrid's flowers resemble an umbel on a stalk. Leaves may be toothed.

Japanese Barberry typically invades pastures and other open or partly open areas including open forests, floodplains or wetland edges. It puts on leaves in the very early Spring and often shades out other plants. After forest logging, already-present Japanese Barberry bushes may expand into thickets that retard forest re-growth. Common Barberry also exhibits invasiveness in disturbed habitats.



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