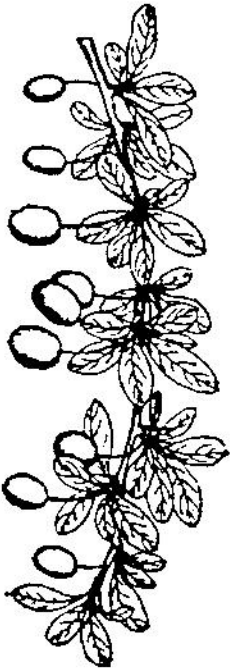


Invasive Alert

Japanese Barberry

Berberis thunbergii



Description:

A deciduous shrub growing to 6 feet with arching branches of dense foliage composed of small rounded leaves atop short individual spines. The yellow flowers produce bright red oblong berries that develop in late summer and persist into winter. The inner bark and roots are yellow. As one of the first plants to leaf out in the spring, it is often recognizable as a pale green haze over the forest floor in early spring.

Common barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), which tends to not be invasive, is distinguished by having toothed leaf margins and two to three short spines under each leaf cluster.

History:

Taken from Japan to the St. Petersburg Botanic Gardens in 1864, seeds of the Japanese Barberry were sent to the Arnold Arboretum in about 1875. Since then this species has been a very popular ornamental in yards, as hedges, and along highways because of its scarlet fruit, attractive fall color, and ease of cultivation.

The Problem:

The seeds dispersed by birds have spread it from cultivated gardens and yards to pastures, woodlands, hedges, and floodplains where it grows equally well in sun or shade. In young forests, barberry forms thorny thickets that shade out and limit the growth of native plants.

Control:

The primary method of controlling barberry is by hand pulling or digging early in the season before seed set. It has shallow roots, but resprouting may occur if the entire root system is not removed. Once larger shrubs have been removed from fields, regular mowing should prevent reestablishment.

Alternatives:

Many native shrubs can be used to attract wildlife and for ornamental purposes. Examples include Highbush Blueberry, Viburnum, and Winterberry.

P.O. Box 2488 Providence, RI 02906 (401) 453-3777, office@riwps.org, www.riwps.org

RI Wild Plant Society