

Invasive Species Alert

Japanese barberry

(*Berberis thunbergii*)

Established in Michigan

Identification:

- Spiny, deciduous shrub usually 1-2 feet, but can grow up to 6 feet in height
- Small, oval-shaped green leaves with smooth edges turn red in the fall
- Brown to reddish stems with thorns at each node
- Small, pale yellow flowers with six petals hang from stems, blooming in spring
- Fruits are small, bright red, egg-shaped berries that persist into winter
- Can be confused with the native American barberry, which has toothed leaves



John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Habitat: Japanese barberry tolerates a wide range of soils and moisture conditions and can thrive in sun or shade. It is often found in forests, pastures and old fields and along woodland edges, roadsides and disturbed areas.



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Native Range: Japan

U.S. Distribution: Introduced throughout the northeast and Midwest United States, south to Georgia and also in Washington.

Local Concern: Japanese barberry is a common ornamental plant that can easily escape cultivation. Its seeds are dispersed by birds and wildlife. Plants are not browsed by livestock or wildlife due to thorns, giving it a competitive advantage over native plants. Shrubs form dense stands that displace native species. Japanese barberry can raise pH levels in soil.

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