

# NEW JERSEY NON-NATIVE PLANTS

## Japanese barberry

(*Berberis thunbergii*)



### Description

Japanese barberry is a woody deciduous shrub with dense spiny branches. It usually grows 2-3 feet high. The simple rounded leaves form rosettes along the branches in an alternate pattern. It produces solitary or small clusters of yellow flowers along the stem in spring, and the fruit ripens to a bright red oblong berry in late summer. Fruits are bird dispersed and are also eaten by small mammals. It is commonly planted as an ornamental shrub and for wildlife enhancement. It often invades alluvial woods and open forests. It also grows along forest edges and in disturbed areas, as well as and many along creek and river banks. Japanese barberry occasionally grows in saturated soil in wooded calcareous swamps. It is most abundant in the Piedmont, Highland, and Ridge & Valley provinces of the state.



### Why is Japanese barberry bad for New Jersey?

Japanese barberry can grow in sun or shade and in many soil types. Indigenous to Asia, the plant was introduced to the United States as an ornamental shrub in the late 1800s. It now ranges from Maine to Georgia, and west to Wyoming and Colorado, and is considered invasive in at least nine other eastern states. Branches touching the ground can

root, and new shoots can develop from underground roots. Barberry can grow so thick in the understory of open forests that it shades out indigenous understory plants and decreases biological diversity. This could adversely affect birds and other animals dependent on the native plants. Barberry also affects soil properties, particularly pH, which can affect plant establishment. Severe infestations of barberry can form nearly impenetrable thorny thickets that impact the recreational value of natural lands.

# Japanese barberry



## **Control:**

### **How can you get rid of Japanese barberry?**

Japanese barberry is widely sold as an ornamental in many nurseries and home improvement stores, thus the first line of defense is to avoid purchasing and/or planting it.

#### **Mechanical:**

Mechanical removal by hoe or weed wrench is effective if most of the root system can be removed. Regular mowing can prevent reinfestation in successional fields. Be sure to wear protective clothing such as leather gloves, a long sleeved shirt, and long pants to avoid the thorns.

**Chemical:** Herbicide treatment can be used to treat shoots that resprout. Small patches can be pulled or dug out early in the season, before seed set.

