



INVASIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

NOVEMBER 2020



Penn State Extension

JAPANESE BARBERRY

B. thunbergii

HISTORY & IDENTIFICATION

- Imported to US in the late 1800s as an ornamental shrub
- Used as a living fence for livestock
- Distinctly spoon shaped leaves with smooth edges
- Leaves are green or burgundy (cultivar)

LIFE CYCLE & GROWTH HABIT

- A spiny, compact, dense shrub with arching branches and typically 2-3' tall
- Pale yellow, dangling flowers bloom in April and May with bright red egg-shaped berries ripening in summer and remaining on the stem until winter
- Reproduces by seed and clonal shoots below the ground and by the tips of its branches which root freely where they touch the ground
- Shrub will re-sprout vigorously when damaged by cutting or fire
- It doesn't have a large persistent seedbank



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PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT

- Effective way to control is preventing seed production and dispersal

MECHANICAL

- Since they have shallow roots, pulling seedlings and small plants is effective when soil is moist
- Using gloves for protection from sharp spines
- For larger plants, used a spade and be sure to tamp down disturbed soil afterwards.
- If cut or mowed, keep an eye on re-sprouting
- All pulled plant material should be bagged and thrown out



NATIVE ALTERNATIVES

Witch Alder
(*Fothergilla gardenia*)

New Jersey Tea
(*Ceanothus americanus*)

Virginia Sweetspire
(*Itea virginica*)



IMPORTANT NOTE

Recent studies have documented a relationship between Japanese barberry and deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), where the tick finds the plant's form and growth habit as a favorable niche habitat and microclimate because it buffers extreme temperature and humidity fluctuations. The white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*), the primary vector for Lyme disease, also finds refuge under or around barberry, creating a higher density of Lyme-infected ticks.

RESOURCES

<https://extension.psu.edu/japanese-barberry>

<https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/JapaneseBarberryBCP.pdf>

Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants by C. Colson Burrell, Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-Region Guide, 2007, pp.173-177