WEED of the MONTH

Japanese Barberry, *Berberis thunbergii*

ODNR Division of Forestry
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Japanese barberry is a dense, deciduous, spiny shrub that grows 2-8 feet. The branches are brown, grooved and somewhat zig-zag in form. There is a sharp spine at each stem node. The leaves are small and spatula shaped. The flowers are small, yellow and inconspicuous. The fall fruits are bright red berries that hang below the stems into the winter.

Japanese barberry may be confused with American barberry (B. canadensis) and the European barberry (B. vulgaris).

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?
Japanese barberry forms dense stands in mature woods, natural lands, wetlands and open areas. It is shade tolerant and very adaptable to a variety of conditions. It raises soil pH, nitrogen levels, and biological activity in the soil. Research shows that the presence of barberry reduces the depth of leaf litter in forest. Wildlife will avoid browsing barberry, which gives it a competitive advantage.

HABITAT Barberry is shade tolerant, drought resistant and adaptable to a variety of open and wooded habitats, wetlands and disturbed areas. Due to its ornamental interest, barberry is still widely propagated and sold by nurseries for landscaping purposes in most of the US.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS Planting barberry in recent years has fueled its spread into natural areas. Because it is a prolific seeder with a high germination rate, prevention of seed production is the first priority in control of this pest. Hand pulling can be effective. Thick gloves are recommended to protect against the sharp spines on the stems. This plant is easy to identify as it leafs out earlier than most natives. Glyphosate and triclopyr have been found to be effective especially in infestations too large for hand pulling. Application early in the season protects non target species. Applications in late summer before fruiting may be most effective. Follow label and Federal and State requirements.

USE PESTICIDES WISELY: ALWAYS READ THE ENTIRE PESTICIDE LABEL CAREFULLY, FOLLOW ALL MIXING AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND WEAR ALL RECOMMENDED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR AND CLOTHING. CONTACT YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL PESTICIDE USE REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

For information on how to identify and control Japanese barberry or how to better manage your trees, contact the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry at 614-265-6366.