

# Japanese Barberry

*Berberis thunbergii*

**Identification:** These shrubs, usually about 3 feet tall, grow underneath forest canopies. Several varieties are used for landscaping and in gardens. Short, smooth-edged leaves often have reddish or purple tints. Sharp spines are found along the stem immediately underneath leaves.



**KEY TRAIT:** From late summer through winter, these bushes are easily identified by their oblong, bright red berries.

**Impact:** This prickly bush, an annoyance to hikers, invades and quickly replaces the existing understory community. Leaf litter can change local soil chemistry, making environments less hospitable for native plants.

**Removal:** Japanese barberry can prove especially difficult to remove permanently. Plants can be best removed in the springtime. Try:

- pulling up bushes by hand with a hoe or mattock to remove root systems; do not allow roots to remain!
- brush-control herbicides sprayed on stumps after cutting
- controlled burns, if necessary, but only in plant communities that are fire resistant



## Replacement:

Witch Alder *Fothergilla gardenii*  
Mountain Witch Alder *Fothergilla major*  
New Jersey Tea *Ceanothus americanus*  
Bayberry *Morella pensylvanica*