

Department of Environmental Protection  
Environmental and Geographic Information Center  
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## Invasive Plant Information Sheet

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### Japanese Barberry *Berberis thunbergii* Barberry Family (Berberidaceae)

**Ecological Impact:** Japanese barberry is commonly planted as an ornamental, as well as for wildlife food and erosion control. Since the fruits are often eaten by birds that subsequently disperse the seeds, the species has easily naturalized. Barberry suppresses the growth of native herbs. It can survive and grow under a broad range of light and soil moisture conditions, from 1-100% full sun and from 10-40+ % soil moisture content. Under high light conditions, removal of barberry is followed by rapid growth of other species. Under low light conditions, response to removal is much slower.

**Control Methods:** The most effective and least intrusive control for Japanese barberry is physical removal. Shrubs that cannot be removed can be treated with herbicide. For large infestations in fire-adapted communities, burning can be used to kill plants and prevent future establishment.

**Mechanical Control:** Shrubs can be removed by hand pulling and digging. A hoe, weed wrench, or mattock is suggested to uproot the entire bush and all associated roots. Since roots are fairly shallow, even large shrubs can be uprooted. Thick gloves are recommended to protect hands from the shrub's spines. Uprooted plants can be piled to provide cover for small animals.

**Chemical Control:** Shrubs growing in rock piles, or are otherwise difficult to remove, can be treated with herbicides labeled for brush control, such as glyphosate. Late fall or early spring are the recommended application times since, at these times, most native plants are dormant. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that will kill native species as well as barberry. Thus, managers should be cautious not to spray so heavily that herbicide drips off the target species.

**Biological Control:** There are no known methods of biological control.

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