

Invasive Plant Alert

Wintergreen barberry –

Berberis julianae C.K. Schneid

The wintergreen barberry (Chinese barberry) is one of a few species in this genus that has become invasive. It is a shade tolerant, fast growing shrub that can alter soil chemistry. It forms dense thickets which exclude all other plants. White-tail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) avoid browsing barberry; these spiny shrubs are planted as a deer repellent and living fence.



Figure 1 Fragrant flowers. Denis Prévôt Wikimedia commons.

Where to Look

Wintergreen barberry is the most cold tolerant of the invasive *Berberis* spp. It grows from Florida to Vermont. This shrub has bird-dispersed seeds and can become established near cultivation sites. It can grow in all but water-logged soils, both in disturbed and intact landscapes.

This species is native to central China and was initially introduced to North America as an ornamental. It has reported as an invader in parts of Alabama and New York so it is likely to be a problem in the Mid-Atlantic.

Identifying the Plant

Wintergreen barberry is an evergreen shrub that can grow from 1-3m tall. Branches are yellow-brown to grey-brown with yellow shoots. Stems are covered with large (1-3cm)

three-branched spines at nodes. It has leathery lance-shaped leaves (3-10cm x 1-3cm) that are alternately arranged along the stem. They have spiny, toothed margins. The fragrant leaves are green in spring and summer, turning red in the fall.

The white or yellow flowers are small, but noticeably fragrant and bloom in the spring.



Figure 2 Leathery leaves. Sten Porse, Wikimedia commons.

Small fruits (<8mm wide) are produced May through November, maturing to a bluish-black. Fruits are covered with a white waxy coating that can be rubbed off.



Figure 3 Fruits. Cillas Wikimedia commons.

How to get rid of it?

Small plants can be pulled by hand, using gloves to protect from the spines. Fruits should be bagged and removed from the site. Care should be taken to remove all roots to prevent resprouting. Spring is an optimal

time for manual removal, as barberry plants are often the first plants to appear and its leathery leaves are distinctive.

Shrubs can be controlled using herbicides. A foliar spray of 2% Glyphosate or Triclopyr and water plus a 0.5% non-ionic surfactant have been successful. A cut-stump method can also be used.

Herbicides may be applied in the spring but efficacy may be increased after fruits are produced.

Fire, mechanical sawing and chopping have been used to manage related barberry species (*Berberis* sp.) growing in small clumps (≤ 1 m). These methods are most effective as an initial treatment used in combination with a follow-up of herbicides for any regrowth.

Resources:

Flora of China. 19: 723,740. (2011).

http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=2&taxon_id=242308211

FPS65/FP065: *Berberis julianae* Winterberry Barberry. Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. (2011).

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/F/FP06500.pdf>