

Common Barberry

(*Berberis vulgaris*)



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



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Key ID Features

Arrangement: alternate

Leaves: oval, serrate, arranged in clusters of 2-5

Flowers: 10-25 yellow flowers per inflorescence, flowers hang below stem

Fruit: red fruit

Stem: branches have a three pronged spine at the base of each leaf

Root: yellowish fibrous roots, rhizomes

Growth Habit: deciduous thorny shrub grows 2-8 ft. tall



Nisa Karimi, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

The Impact

Common Barberry (also called “European Barberry”) was brought to the United States by European settlers for yellow dye, jam, and hedgerows in the 17th century. It escaped cultivation and now invades forests and wetlands.

Common Barberry has canes that can re-root when they come in contact with the soil allowing the plant to form dense stands that crowd out native plant species. The berries persist on the branches into the winter when they are often consumed and distributed by wildlife. Common Barberry also has economic impacts, acting as an alternate host for wheat rust (*Puccinia graminis*), a fungal disease that damages grain crops.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Berberidaceae

Origin: Europe

Habitat: disturbed areas, meadows and fields, forest edges, forests

Present in Vermont?: yes

Method of Spread: primarily by seeds via wildlife

Status: Class B Noxious Weed*
<http://bit.ly/VTPlantQuarantine>

**The Vermont Noxious Weed Quarantine listing means it is illegal to buy, sell, or transport this species in Vermont*

Invasive: Common Barberry



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Common Look-alike



Cane Fruit (*Rubus* spp.)

Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Distinguishing features

Leaves: compound leaves composed of 3 toothed leaflets

Thorns: curved thorns

Native Plant Alternatives



John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Winterberry
(*Ilex verticillata*): attracts birds and butterflies, provides nesting site for birds



Keith Kanoti, Maine Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Nannyberry
(*Viburnum lentago*): food source for wildlife throughout the fall, grows in a variety of moist soils, often used in hedges, berries are edible

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on **VTinvasives.org** and these additional resources:

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/weedcontrol/noxiouslist/commonbarberry>

References: EDDMaps Ontario - Species - Common Barberry, Minnesota Department of Agriculture - Common Barberry, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Common Barberry

This publication was created in 2019 by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and other VTInvasives.org partners.

