

WEED FILE: **BARBERRY**

REVISED: JUNE 2025



Berberis glaucocarpa

DESCRIPTION

Barberry is a shrub around 2-3 metres tall. It was originally used as a hedge plant, and is therefore found through most of New Zealand, although it prefers higher rainfall locations.

It is semi-deciduous, woody, evergreen, and armed with very sharp spines that appear singly or in a sinister 3-pronged configuration. The leaves are mid-green in colour, roughly oval-shaped, up to 75mm long, and have spiny-toothed edges.

Barberry flowers in mid to late spring, producing clusters of small, yellow flowers with an unpleasant smell.

Flowering is followed by the appearance of small purplish berries with a white-yellow bloom.

Barberry seeds are spread by birds, and the plant does best in areas where the terrain makes access for control more difficult, and where grazing by stock is less intensive. Although not as invasive as some weed trees and shrubs, Barberry is nevertheless capable of eating into productive grazing land from the adjacent forest margins, or by spreading out from isolated locations such as old house sites, orchards and hedges. In more sheltered sites (scrub, forest margins, etc) it is much more invasive.

Barberry is in many areas subject to local authority regulations which require its control at least in some situations.

There are some similar species, including Darwin's Barberry and the European Barberry. The Darwin's Barberry is evergreen, with bright yellow/orange flowers and smaller, shiny dark green leaves. The European Barberry is a deciduous variety, dropping its leaves for winter, and is more common in the central South Island. Although less of an issue on farming land than the common Barberry detailed in this Weed File, these other varieties can be controlled by similar means.

Other similar species include Boxthorn and Hawthorn, which will be discussed in separate Weed Files.



MANUAL REMOVAL

Smaller plants can be successfully removed by grubbing-out, and can then be left on-site to rot down. This can be done at any time of the year.

HERBICIDE CONTROL

These work all year-round. Cut the plant off as low to the ground as possible, and if using Cut'n'Paste gels apply about 3-4mm thick on the freshly cut stump and down the side a little. If painting on then liberally coat the stump with the herbicide mixture immediately after cutting, to ensure optimum herbicide penetration before the cut 'heals'.

Use any of the following Cut'n'Paste gels:

- Picloram Gel
- Bamboo Buster

Cut & Stump Paint

- MSF600 at 5g/L
- GrassMate at 100ml/L
- TRICLO Herbicide at 200ml/L

Trunk Inject

In very large barberry specimens, drill a series of 10mm holes angled down into the lower trunk, and fill with any of the concentrated herbicide solutions recommended above for the Cut & Paint method or Cut'n'Paste gels. You can also ringbark with downwards angled cuts, and fill the cuts with the concentrated herbicide solution or straight Cut'n'Paste gels. The tree will die standing. Removal of lower branches will allow better access to control other weeds, and also encourages subsequent grass growth under the dying tree.

Spot Treatment

Optimum time to spray is summer to autumn. This is the preferred method of control for heavy infestations of Barberry.

- **GrassMate** at 6ml/L by knapsack (i.e 90ml in a 15L knapsack). Add **SuperWetter** organosilicone penetrant at 15ml/15L.
- **MSF600** at 35g/100L by handgun, plus 100ml **SuperWetter** penetrant. 5g/10L by knapsack spray plus 10ml **SuperWetter** penetrant. 10g/10L by mistblower plus 10ml **SuperWetter** penetrant.

Ensure thorough spray coverage of all parts of the plant. If possible spray from all sides. The preferred herbicide for spraying is MSF600 as it gives the best control with least regrowth. GrassMate is effective, and is grass-friendly, but more expensive.