

## Berberis - Care Guide

### **Growing Berberis**

#### *Barberry*

Berberis come in so many forms, shapes and heights, and have so many varied uses in the garden, that it is difficult to maintain a common theme when attempting to describe them all to you. Burncoose offers 16 to 20 different varieties of Berberis so I have categorised them for you as best I can below.

All are totally hardy and very easy to grow. They will grow in almost any well drained soil in full sun or dappled shade. Fruiting and autumn colours are best in full sun. Evergreen species need minimal pruning (merely tidying up) while deciduous varieties are best cut back fairly severely after flowering (say 25%) to produce new growth and more flowers next year. Pruning deciduous varieties need not be undertaken every year. Berberis grown as hedge are also best shaped and pruned immediately after the flowers have finished.

### **Larger shrubby Berberis**

The little known, and rare in the wild, *Berberis valdiviana* from Chile is the largest growing species which we grow. At Antony House in Cornwall near Torpoint these form avenues of 15-20ft tall small trees. The long drooping racemes of saffron yellow flowers are really quite a sight. This is an evergreen species.

*Berberis julianae* can reach heights of 8-10ft as a freestanding shrub as can *Berberis longensis* 'Apricot Queen' over time. Both are evergreen while the former has yellow flowers and the latter stunning dark orange ones in large clusters.

*Berberis x ottawensis* 'Superba' will get to around 8ft situated in isolation and its red-purple leaves contrast with its pale yellow flowers. This is a deciduous variety. We sometimes have in stock *Berberis temolaica*, a species which has a spreading habit (10x10ft), is deciduous, and has pale yellow flowers with its emerging grey-green leaves.



*Berberis x ottawensis*

All the many forms of *Berberis thunbergii*, the Japanese barberry, are suitable for smaller gardens and none grow much more than 5ft; some much less. The choice of leaf and flower colour is yours but *B. thunbergii* 'Aurea' has lovely bright golden yellow foliage, while 'Rose Glow' and 'Admiration' have different leaf colour combinations that change through the season as you can see in the photographs below.

All *Berberis thunbergii* are deciduous.

### **Berberis for hedging and to deter burglars**

"Barberries" is a common name which has real meaning! The spines on *Berberis* are not for the fainthearted intruder.

*Berberis darwinii* makes a dense evergreen hedge which can be kept to, say, 6ft and it produces absolutely masses of hanging racemes of dark orange flowers in mid and late spring which is quite a bonus as against other evergreen hedges.

*Berberis verruculosa* is another evergreen which is nasty to get through but it has a more drooping habit and only grows to around 5ft with golden yellow flowers.

If you have room, and the energy to keep it under control, our view is that *Berberis ottawensis* 'Superba' is as good a deterrent to children, dogs and unwelcome visitors as you could possibly grow.

### **Best berries and autumn colour**

This really becomes a matter of personal choice but my favourite for both of these features is *Berberis wilsoniae*. The foliage turns a delightful red and orange (yellow in shade) in autumn and clusters of coral-pink then red-pink berries stand out on the leafless bush. These are grown with us in more shady parts of the woodland garden where individual shrubs can achieve 3-5ft in height with a similar spread. We do not prune them at all.

In Cornwall we do not find that much fruit on our *Berberis* (although it may well be more hidden on evergreen varieties) but *B. wilsoniae* is the top performer.

### **Hardwood Cuttings - Video Tip**

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/hD89TCgAJt0?start=593>

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