

Lycium barbarum - Growing Guide

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Chinese box thorn, Wolfberry, Goji Berry

Lycium barbarum is a spiny, rambling and arching shrub which is popular here in Cornwall for growing in exposed coastal locations where soils are thin and sandy. It may be a useful alternative for Tamarix or Rhamnus in maritime conditions. The flowers may be inconspicuous but the berries are not. The spines may also have their uses in keeping out unwanted visitors from the beach. Its overall height in maturity is 8-12ft with a similar or greater overall spread.

This deciduous species was introduced into the UK some 300 years ago and is widely distributed and naturalised in Europe. It however originates from China. The leaves are oblong-lance shaped and grey green especially in immaturity. Small funnel-shaped purple flowers appear in the leaf axils from June through to September. These are followed by larger egg-shaped scarlet or orange berries which are each about $\frac{3}{4}$ in long. The berries are a superfood, edible and can be dried too and eaten all year.

If grown as a hedge, which is perhaps its main use, give its trailing stems a good hard prune in early spring and, due to the vigour of this plant when established, a further trim in summer may well be a good idea.

The seed should be sown ripe and both hardwood and softwood cuttings work well. It may not be the most desirable or attractive of plants but it does have its uses in more difficult growing conditions.



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