

Berberis X mentorensis - Mentor Barberry (*Berberidaceae*)

Berberis X mentorensis is a tough, urban-tolerant shrub or hedge with dense foliage and prominent spines. Mentor Barberry is used as a barrier hedge or in group plantings, but can also be planted as an unpruned solitary shrub for uses such as a small bird refuge.

FEATURES

Form

- medium-sized foliage shrub
- maturing at about 6' tall x 6' wide, if not pruned or sheared to a smaller dimension
- upright rounded to upright spreading growth habit
- slow growth rate



Culture

- full sun to partial sun
- very tolerant of various soils, soil pHs, soil compaction, drought, heat, pruning, and pollution
- propagated primarily by rooted stem cuttings
- Barberry Family, with few diseases or pests
- low availability, in B&B or container form

Foliage

- new foliage emerges yellowish green, but turns dark green or blue-green by summer
- semi-evergreen to slowly deciduous leaves are 1-2" long, alternate, elliptical, with a cuneate base, no petiole, and have short spines on the mature leaf margins
- autumn color is yellow- to wine-colored in late autumn and early winter

Flowers

- yellow, in late Apr. to early May, in pendulous clusters that hang directly from the stems
- not showy, yet attractive when viewed close-up, and attracting many bees

Fruits

- usually not present, and ornamentally insignificant when present

Twigs

- transition from yellow-green to red to brown stems with maturity, being lightly grooved, with small, scaly buds
- stems, branches, and roots are slightly brittle and sometimes broken when bent or transplanted, revealing a bright yellow interior wood
- relatively thick stems and branches have 1-, 2-, or 3-pointed spines, unlike Japanese Barberry,



which has single spines covering its twigs (an ID feature!)

Trunk

- not applicable

USAGE

Function

- formal hedge, informal hedge, thorny barrier hedge, wildlife refuge shrub, or group planting shrub

Texture

- medium when in foliage, semi-evergreen, or bare
- thick density in foliage and when bare

Assets

- good urban stress tolerant shrub that takes well to shearing
- prominent spines (if they are desired) serve as an effective deterrent
- foliage and stems typically extend all the way to the ground (a desirable trait for a formal hedge)
- small bird refuge;

Liabilities

- prominent spines (if they are not desired), which can cause injury and pain
- garbage and leaf collector (at the base of the spiny-stemmed shrub)

Habitat

- Zones 5 to 8
- a hybrid of Wintergreen Barberry (*Berberis julianae*, native to China) and Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*, native to Japan), hybridized in Mentor, Ohio (hence the common name)

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- other thorny or spiny shrubs serving as hedges or barriers (*Acanthopanax sieboldianus*, *Berberis thunbergii*, *Rosa rugosa*, etc.)
- shrubs for bird refuge: Birds love to have dense, thorny shrubs or trees in which to pause during their daily activities of flight and feeding, or to nest, since the dense twigs and thorns protect them from sudden attack by natural enemies, such as cats. Mentor Barberry is therefore a logical shrub that, when left unpruned in its natural form, is an excellent complement to larger thorny (*Crataegus crusgalli*, *Crataegus phaenopyrum*, *Rosa multiflora*, etc.) or spur-shoot laden (*Malus sargentii*, *Photinia villosa*, *Viburnum prunifolium*, etc.) shrubs and trees in areas where bird feeding or general bird attraction is desired.

Cultivars - Variants - Related species

- selections of the hybrid *Berberis X mentorensis* apparently do not exist; the species is the only form available