Introduction

Wintergreen barberry is ideal for use as an almost impenetrable hedge or barrier planting, with its dense branching growth habit, spiny leaves up to three inches long, and the three-parted spines located along the stiff stems (Fig. 1). Plants reach six to eight feet in height with a spread of three to four feet. One of the hardiest evergreen barberries, the leaves of wintergreen barberry may turn a lovely wine-red or purplish-bronze in the winter and are joined by the persistent blue-black berries. Clusters of small, lemon yellow blooms appear in late spring for a week or two and may occasionally have an unpleasant fragrance. Fairly erect but more rounded with age, wintergreen barberry also works well in mixed shrubbery borders or as a foundation planting. Group three together in a shrubbery border for a nice, contrasting textural effect. Barberry makes a good barrier or hedge plant since a person will attempt to walk through it only once.

General Information

Scientific name: Berberis julianae
Pronunciation: BUR-bur-iss jool-ee-AN-ee
Common name(s): wintergreen barberry
Family: Berberidaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 9A (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: hedge; border; screen
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 4 to 6 feet


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Spread: 2 to 5 feet
Plant habit: vase shape; round; upright
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

**Foliage**
- Leaf arrangement: alternate
- Leaf type: simple
- Leaf margin: spiny
- Leaf shape: lanceolate
- Leaf venation: pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence: fragrant
- Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color: green
- Fall color: red
- Fall characteristic: showy

**Flower**
- Flower color: white
- Flower characteristic: spring flowering

**Fruit**
- Fruit shape: oval
- Fruit length: less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover: fleshy
- Fruit color: red
- Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant; attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**
- Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; thorns present
- Current year stem/twig color: yellow
- Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

**Culture**
- Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam
- Drought tolerance: moderate
- Soil salt tolerances: unknown
- Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

**Other**
- Roots: usually not a problem
- Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
- Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
- Invasive potential: not particularly invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**
Wintergreen barberry is fairly adaptable to a wide range of soil conditions but looks its best when grown on rich, somewhat moist soil in full sun or light shifting shade. Plants will require some pruning to maintain their best form. In time, the center of the plant becomes thick with dead and living stems massed together in a thicket. Remove the dead stems and thin the living stems to allow more light to reach the interior of the plant. Wear heavy gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning barberry.

Cultivars include: 'Nana', three to four feet high, has very large spines and forms a solid mound of glossy dark green foliage which becomes wine-red in winter. Unfortunately, 'Nana' is difficult to find commercially. *Berberis gagnepainii*, black barberry, has flower and fruit similar to wintergreen barberry but is wider and has more pendulous branches.

Propagation is by semi-hardwood cuttings rooted under mist.

**Pests and Diseases**
No pests or diseases are of major concern.