

Berberis darwinii

COMMON NAMES

Darwin's barberry

FAMILY

Berberidaceae

AUTHORITY

Berberis darwinii Hook.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

BERDAR

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A lowland plant. Plant occurs in sites with low-moderate fertility. Plant found in low forest, scrub, forest margins and shrublands. Plant found in remnant forest stands, scrub, along forest and plantation margins, roadsides in Chile (Webb, Sykes and Garnock-Jones 1988). Plant found in forest margins, secon-growth bush, scrub, plantations and roadsides.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spiny evergreen shrub up to about 4m tall. The leaves are a dark glossy green and are stiff up to 3.5 by 1.5 cm with 3-5 spiny points. Spines beneath each leaf are palmate with 5 points. Flowers are orange-yellow held in a raceme and the berries are dark purple to black with a bluish white waxy bloom.

SIMILAR TAXA

Can be distinguished from other *Berberis* species in New Zealand by the 5-partite spines beneath the leaves.

FLOWERING

July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February

FLOWER COLOURS

Orange, Yellow

FRUITING

November-February



Immature fruit. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt.
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:
29/11/2001, Licence: CC BY.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer:
Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/11/2001,

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. Seeds germinate in September and the plant regenerates from root suckers, layers and crown. Can reproduce both sexually and asexually (Keller, 1983). Soil bank does not survive beyond the first season (Atkinson 1997). Seed is produced at approximately 15 000/m squared ground projection. Seeds are not viable after the first season and are dispersed by vertebrates; birds and possums.

YEAR NATURALISED

1946

ORIGIN

South Chile, Argentina

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Disposal Method - replant bare sites to minimise seeding. Preferred Control - cut stem and apply vigilant as per the label. Can be done all year round. Alternative Control - stump swab: Escort label rates or Tordon Brush Killer, 10%.

TOLERANCES

The plant has a high tolerance of shade (McQueen 1993), drought and frost and is only slightly tolerant of poor drainage. After physical damage and grazing resprouting occurs from all parts.

ETYMOLOGY

berberis: From the Arabic name berberys

darwinii: After Charles Robert Darwin (1809 – 1882) an English naturalist, geologist, and biologist, widely known for his contributions to evolutionary biology.

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for February 2005](#) for the full story.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/berberis-darwinii/>

PDF DATE

17 September 2024