

# Darwin's Barberry

## *Berberis darwinii*

**Progressive Control Plant under the  
West Coast Regional Pest Plant  
Management Strategy**



### **National Pest Plant Accord Status**

Darwin's Barberry is listed in the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. For more information refer to the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website at [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa)

### **Where has it come from?**

Darwin's Barberry was one of many plants found in South America by Charles Darwin on the 1835 Beagle expedition. From there it was transferred back to Europe and thence around the world as an ornamental plant. It is sometimes known as American Barberry and has a number of near relatives, *B. Vulgaris*, *B. souliana*, *B. Wilsonae* and *B. Glaucoarpa*. At present there are only isolated infestations on the West Coast.

### **What does Darwin's Barberry look like?**

Darwin's Barberry is an evergreen shrub which can grow up to 5m high. Leaves are shiny dark-green and spiny (but smaller than holly) and the stems are tough, woody and hairy with 5-pronged needle sharp spines.

It has drooping clusters of deep orange flowers (5-7mm in diameter) from July through to February which develop into hanging groups of oval purple-black berries with a white bloom or coating.

The plant is spread mostly from birds and possums eating the berries but can also re-vegetate from root suckers or by layering.

### **Why is Darwin's Barberry a Pest Plant?**

Darwin's Barberry thrives in a variety of environmental conditions, tolerating moderate to cold temperatures, damp to dry conditions, high winds, salt air and being mowed or grazed.

It is highly invasive, once it establishes along bush and riparian margins, roadsides and on wasteland. Darwin's Barberry will out-compete native plant growth in these areas, suppressing the natural biodiversity. It can also rapidly become a problem in production forest areas and on prime farmland.

*Top right: Darwin's Barberry shrubs [EW]*

*At Right: Darwin's Barberry flowers [TRC]*



## What are the best methods of control?

Depending on the level of infestation, there are a variety of methods which can be used to control Darwin's Barberry. It is imperative that control work is followed up at regular intervals.

### **Manual Methods**

Dig out smaller plants prior to berry development and leave to rot, compost or dispose of to lined landfill. Take care if leaving to rot down that stems do not 'layer' and take root again. Follow-up six monthly until all signs of plants have gone then replant with preferred species.

### **Herbicide Methods**

For larger plants and/or a wider area of infestation there are three choices, all of which will need follow-up.

- Stump swabbing: cut the plants down to stumps no higher than 5cm then immediately apply herbicide concentrate or gel over both the stump surface and sides. Suitable herbicides are those with the active ingredients glyphosate (Roundup, Watkins Weedkiller, Glyphosate 360) OR metsulfuron (Escort) OR Triclopyr (Grazon, Victory) OR Vigilant Gel.
- Cut and inject: using a hatchet or machete, make shallow cuts right round the trunk to join up (ringbarking) and apply a herbicide to the point of run-off in each cut. Suitable herbicides for this are metsulfuron products (Escort, Zeal, Meturon).
- Overall spraying: using a knapsack sprayer or handgun ensure that all leaf surfaces are well covered with spray for effective control. Do this over the period from late spring through until autumn. Suitable herbicides for this are metsulfuron products (Escort, Zeal, Meturon) or those containing glyphosate (Roundup, Watkins Weedkiller, Glyphosate 360).

**For personal safety please use all herbicides as per manufacturer's labelling**

### **Biocontrols**

There are no known biocontrol agents for Darwin's Barberry at present.

## Where can I get more help?

For further information call either of the Regional Weedbusters Co-ordinators. They are:

**Mary Traves:** Environmental Information Officer, West Coast Regional Council (768 0466 or 0508 800 118)

**Tom Belton:** Technical Support Officer Biosecurity & Weeds, Department of Conservation, West Coast - Tai Poutini Conservancy, Hokitika (03 756 9100)



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)

*The West Coast Regional Council does not accept liability for any advice given on this sheet regarding application of herbicides for pest plant control. The brand names listed imply neither endorsement of those brands, nor criticism of any other brands not listed.*