

# April Invasive Plant Highlight

## Butterfly Bush and Japanese Barberry



### What are Butterfly Bush and Japanese Barberry?



*Butterfly Bush*

**Butterfly Bush**, *Buddleja davidii*, despite its value as a pollinator food source is native to Asia and can be an aggressive invasive. In the wild, it displaces native asters and milkweeds that local butterflies are dependent on as a host plant for their caterpillars. It is better for pollinators if you plant locally native shrubs and perennials that are both a good food source and a host plant.

Butterfly Bush can grow up to 15 feet tall. The leaves are opposite, 6-10 in. (15-25 cm) long, velvety and lanced-shaped. Flowering occurs from May to August when dense clusters of tubular flowers develop. The seeds are dust-like particles which can easily be distributed by the wind.

**Japanese barberry**, *Berberis thunbergii*, was introduced in the United States as an ornamental plant and is native to Japan and eastern Asia. Like many invasive species, it escaped from managed care and can dominate in forests and along woodland edges displacing valuable native shrubs including host plants for butterflies.



*Japanese Barberry*

It is a woody plant that can grow 3 to 6 feet tall with a similar width. Japanese barberry has small, oval, alternate leaves. Foliage is green to a dark reddish purple. The stems have single spines along their length. Barberry is a very dense plant due to the multitude of small twigs and branches. Small, yellow flowers are produced during the spring, but are not particularly noticeable since they are under the foliage. Red fruit develops and can persist into winter.

### Better Native Shrubs

Buttonbush, Common Winterberry, Virginia Sweetspire, Lowbush Blueberry, Highbush Blueberry, Spicebush, Sweet Pepperbush and Common Elderberry

### Please Remove It!

If you have either of these shrubs, please remove them before it spreads into other adjacent properties. Young plants can be removed by hand, but the larger plants will need to be dug up. Follow-up may be needed later if new plants germinate.

\*When working with Barberry wear gloves as it has spines.

### More information about Butterfly Bush and Japanese Barberry:

<https://invasivegarden.com/how-to-get-rid-of-japanese-barberry/>

<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=3010>

<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=11608>

## Why Native Plants?

*As open space disappears, it is necessary to look at our own landscapes for biodiversity.* Native plants promote the unique relationships between our native plants and animals, from the smallest microorganisms, insects and other invertebrates to birds and mammals.

Native plants, from grasses and wildflowers to towering shade trees, form the base of the food chain. Our native insects are uniquely adapted to eat native plants; some are generalists and can eat a variety of plants, but many are specialists that can only digest certain types of leaves based on the chemistry of the plant.

Research by the entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars whereas ginkgos, a commonly planted landscape tree from Asia, host only 5 species of caterpillars. When it takes over 6,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of chickadees, that is a significant difference.

### More information on native plants:

[www.vnps.org/natives](http://www.vnps.org/natives)

[www.plantnovanatives.org](http://www.plantnovanatives.org)

[www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder](http://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder)

[www.audubon.org/native-plants](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants)

### More information on invasive plants:

[www.invasiveplantatlas.org](http://www.invasiveplantatlas.org)

[www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)



*Native Virginia Bluebells*

## Who We Are?

The City of Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team restores the local ecosystem in city parks. We remove damaging invasive plants then re-plant with natives that benefit our local birds, butterflies, bees, and pollinators.

We are a community task force that supports the City's Green Space department. We have monthly events in the Fall and Spring open to volunteers.

## Contact Information

Website: [www.fallschurchva.gov/940/Environmental-Opportunities](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/940/Environmental-Opportunities)



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