

## Leave the Red Berry Picking Behind this Holiday Season!

This season there are 3 Red Berries you SHOULD NOT be picking. Japanese barberry, Bittersweet, and Winterberry. Japanese barberry and Bittersweet are invasive plants and if their seeds get into the ground to grow new plants this will promulgate their plant dispersal, A BAD THING. Winterberry is NOT invasive, it is a native plant. It's berries are a very important food item for various species during the winter months. Picking these berries will damage the ability of these species to forage for food in the winter. Please note that picking berries on Conservation Land is strictly prohibited at any time.

Japanese Barberry is a particular threat to open and second-growth forest types. This plant, after establishing a stronghold, can eventually grow thick enough to crowd out native understory plants. The native plants will no longer be there to keep a very sensitive ecological balance. Dense patches of barberry can be difficult and even painful (because of the plant's spines) be able to get through.



Japanese Barberry (photo by Leslie Mehrhoff, courtesy of the New England Wild Flower Society)

Asian or Asiatic Bittersweet poses a serious threat to other species and to whole habitats due to its aggressive nature of twining around and growing over other vegetation. Slowly the vines will choke the tree and shrubs to death. This plant can also shade out other plant communities. This plant has a high reproductive rate, long-range dispersal mechanisms, and the ability to root-sucker. In other words, this plant is hard to combat!



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Winterberry's fruit serve as an emergency food source for birds. Small mammals, songbirds and game birds, including eastern bluebirds, wild turkeys, and quail, and white-tailed deer also partly depend on this shrub as a food source.



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