Darwin's barberry

Berberis darwinii

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Berberidaceae (barberry)

Where is it originally from?
Chile and Argentina

What does it look like?
Evergreen, spiny, yellow-wooded shrub (<4+ m tall) with tough, woody and densely hairy stems with tough, 5-pronged, needle-sharp spines. Hairless, glossy, dark green leaves (10-30 x 5-15 mm) are usually spiny-serrated along edges. Hanging clusters (7 cm long) of deep orange-yellow flowers (5-7 mm diameter, July-Feb) are followed by oval purplish-black berries (5-7 mm diameter) with a bluish-white surface.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Are there any similar species?
European barberry (*B. vulgaris*) is deciduous and has red berries. *B. souliena*, *B. wilsonae* are both cultivated. Barberry (*B. glaucocarpa*) has paler yellow flowers and less glossy leaves.

Why is it weedy?
Long-lived plant, with well-dispersed seeds. Tolerates moderate to cold temperatures, damp to dry conditions, high wind, salt, shade, damage, grazing (not browsed), and a range of soils.

Photo: Trevor James

How does it spread?
Birds and possibly possums eat the berries containing the seeds. Occasionally spread by soil and water movement.

What damage does it do?
Scattered plants (occasionally dense stands) replace shrubland and regenerating forest, sometimes permanently in open habitats.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Disturbed forest and shrubland, short tussockland, herbfield, and bare land.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - dig out small plants or excavate larger areas. Burn all plant material or dispose of to refuse.
2. Cut and paste (all year round) - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground as possible and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) or metsulfuron gel (10g/l strength) to the entire cut stem.
3. Basal spray - spray stems up to 20cm diametre with X-Tree Basal. Ensure the base is thoroughly covered at ground level.
4. Drill or frill - Drill downward sloping holes around the circumference of the trunk about 8-10 cm apart, or Frill (make deep cuts into the sapwood at regular intervals around the base of the tree, taking care not to ring-bark the plant). Fill the holes with undiluted 'neat' glyphosate (360g/L active ingredient) or saturate the frill cuts with glyphosate (360g/L active ingredient) mixed at 250ml/L OR metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (20-50g/L + penetrant) OR a product containing 100g picloram+300g triclopyr/L (undiluted).

Photo: Trevor James

5. Foliar spray - Apply metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient) (Knapsack 0.5g/L, or Gun and hose 20-35g/100L) plus organosilicone penetrant (3ml/L) to thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Metsulfuron overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts. CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Cut stumps resprout quickly, and can be hard to kill and seeds will germinate onto bare land. Follow up 6 monthly. Replant bare sites to minimise seeding.