

# *Berberis vulgaris* L.

**Standardized Common Name:** Barberry

**Other Common Name:** European Barberry

**Family:** Berberidaceae

**Taxonomy:** *Berberis* includes about 500 species, distributed almost worldwide. *Berberis vulgaris* is one of two species native to Europe. It was widely cultivated and naturalized in North America also, but because it is an alternate host for a pathogenic fungus of wheat, eradication programs have greatly reduced its occurrence.

**Description:** Shrub, (0.3–)1–3 m high; most of leaves on long shoots reduced to spines; spines often 3-lobed; bark gray. Foliage leaves deciduous, mostly clustered on short shoots, 1–6 cm long, elliptical to somewhat obovate; texture usually thin and flexible; base attenuate; apex rounded to obtuse; margins usually serrate, with teeth spine-tipped; both surfaces dull, the upper somewhat glaucous. Inflorescences racemose, lateral (technically terminal on very short shoots), (1–)3–6 cm long, 10–30-flowered. Flowers yellow; sepals 6, quickly lost, 3–6 mm long; petals 6, 3–6 mm long, producing nectar; stamens 6; ovary compound, 1-styled. Fruit a berry, red to purple or black, oblong, 5–11 mm long, 2-seeded.

**Parts in Commerce:** Bark (fruit and roots also have traditional uses)

## Identification:

- Small flat or curved pieces, mostly <1 cm broad
- 0.5–2.0 mm thick
- Outer surface dark yellowish-gray, longitudinally furrowed, in older bark becoming fissured and scaly, sometimes with small black lichenous spots
- Inner surface dark yellow to brown, glistening, longitudinally striated and fibrous, often with attached fragments of yellow wood
- Fracture short in outer portion, fibrous and laminated in inner portion
- In transverse section, has thin cork and cortex, thicker brown phloem containing yellow parenchyma rays
- Taste bitter
- Chewing colors saliva yellow

## References:

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