

Flora of South Australia

5th Edition



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5th Edition | Edited by Jürgen Kellermann

BERBERIDACEAE¹

J.Kellermann²

Shrubs, small trees or herbs (not in S.A.); leaves deciduous or evergreen, alternate, radical or cauline, simple or divided or modified into spines; stipules absent or reduced. **Inflorescence** paniculate, cymose, racemose, spicate or flowers solitary, bracteate; flowers regular, perianth in 2–3 whorls of 4–6 parts; outer whorl(s) sepal-like, inner whorl petal-like with nectariferous sacs or scales, sometimes nectaries absent; stamens as many or twice as many as petals, filaments sometimes absent; ovary superior, carpel 1, locule 1 with 1–several ovules, style short or absent and stigma sessile. **Fruit** a berry, capsule or papery bladder; seeds sometimes arillate.

A family of 12–16 genera and about 650 species, the herbaceous species distributed in northern America and Eurasia; shrubby species occur in the same area and extend into S America, E Africa, the Carribean and Malesia. In Australia 2 genera and 6 species are naturalised. The family includes many ornamental plants, and the species in Australia are all presumed to have escaped from cultivation.

Spencer (1997) and Morley & Wilson (2007) have *Berberis* and *Mabonia* as distinct genera, but this division is not always recognised as there is a large number of species with characters from both genera. Many authors include *Mabonia* in an enlarged *Berberis* (e.g. Whittemore 1997). Phylogenetic analyses (Kim *et al.* 2004) support the merger and this is also accepted in this treatment.

References: Morley & Wilson (2007); Whittemore (1997).

1. BERBERIS L.

Sp. Pl. 1: 330 (1753); *Gen. Pl.* (ed. 5) 153 (1754).

(The name is derived from *berberys*, the Arabic name for the fruit.)

Mabonia Nutt., *Gen. N. Amer. Pl.* 1: 211 (1818), *nom. cons.*

Shrubs or small trees, wood and inner bark yellow; leaves evergreen or deciduous, alternate, simple or pinnate; normal leaves in fascicles on short axillary spurs; modified leaves develop into tripartite spines on long shoots, or spines absent. **Inflorescence** usually terminal on lateral shoots, racemose, fascicles or flowers solitary; perianth yellow, subtended by 2–3 bracts; sepals 6; petals 6 often smaller than sepals, each with 2 nectary glands at base; stamens 6; ovary with 1–many ovules; stigma sessile or with a short style. **Fruit** red, purple-red, pruinose or black; seeds 1–several. **Barberries.**

The genus is native to North and South America, Europe, Asia, Malesia and northern Africa. There are several hundred species of *Berberis*, but the exact number is unknown; about 5 species are naturalised in Australia.

¹ This work can be cited as: Kellermann, J. (2013). Berberidaceae (version 2). In: Kellermann, J. (ed.), *Flora of South Australia* (ed. 5). 3 pp. (State Herbarium of South Australia: Adelaide). flora.sa.gov.au/ed5

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© Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Government of South Australia. ISBN 978-1-922027-37-5 (PDF).
Publication date: 31 Oct. 2013.



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1. Leaves pinnate; branches spineless 1. **B. aquifolium**
- 1: Leaves simple; branches spiny
 2. Leaf margin spiny-toothed, upper surface green; evergreen 2. **B. darwinii**
 - 2: Leaf margins entire, upper surface dark purple; deciduous 3. **B. thunbergii** var. **atropurpurea**

1. ***Berberis aquifolium** Pursh, *Fl. Amer. Sept.* 1: 219, pl. 4 (1814). — *Mahonia aquifolium* (Pursh) Nutt., *Gen. N. Amer. Pl.* 1: 212 (1818). — **Illustr.:** *Fl. N. America* 3: 285 (1997).

Deciduous shrub to 2 m, stems spineless, bark grey-brown, suckering underground; leaves compound, to 30 cm long, leaflets 5–9 (–11), obliquely ovate, to 10 × 5 cm, base obtuse or truncate, margin with 15–35 spines, glossy above, pale and dull below. **Flowers** yellow; pedicel to 10 mm long. **Fruit** globose, c. 6 mm long, dark blue, pruinose; stigma sessile, persistent. **Oregon grape.**

S.A.: *NL, *SL, *N.S.W.; *Vic. Native to the west coast of North America. Flowers: Sep.

2. ***Berberis darwinii** Hook., *Icon. Pl.* 7: t. 672 (1844). — **Illustr.:** *Fl. N.S.W.* 1: 168 (1990), as *B. aristata*; *Fl. Victoria* 3: 65, fig. 14A–D (1996); Heywood et al., *Fl. Pl. Fam. World* 60, fig. 1A–B (2007).

Evergreen spinose shrub to 3.5 m; branchlets subterete, red-brown, shortly pilose; leaf simple, lamina obovate to ovate-oblong, 1–2 × 0.5–1.2 cm, base cuneate, margin ± spiny-toothed, 3-spined at apex, thick, glossy darkgreen above, paler green below; spines slender, 3–5-partite, 3–7 mm long. **Flowers** golden, flushed with red; pedicel 6–10 mm long, red. **Fruit** globose, c. 7 mm long, dark blue, pruinosa when ripe; style 4 mm long, persistent. **Darwin's barberry.**

S.A.: ?*SL; N.S.W.; *Vic.; *Tas. Native to southern South America; cultivated and naturalised in many countries. Questionably naturalised in S.A. Flowers: Jan. (1 specimen); Sep.–Nov. in other states (Walsh 1996).

3. ***Berberis thunbergii** DC., *Syst. Nat.* 2: 9 (1821), var. **atropurpurea** Chenault, *Rev. Hort.* 98: 307 (1926).

Deciduous spinose shrub to 2 m; young shoots green, glabrous, maturing dark red; leaves simple, ± ovate, 18–40 (–55) × 12–21 mm, base long-attenuate, margins entire, apex rounded, thin and flexible, above dark purple, dull, below grey-green; spines simple or 3-fid, 0.5–1.1 cm long. **Flowers** yellow; pedicel 5–9 mm long, red. **Berries** ellipsoid, 7–8 mm long, red, shiny; style not persistent. **Japanese barberry, red barberry. Pl. 1.**

S.A.: ?*SL; *N.S.W. Native to Japan; this variety described from plants in cultivation in France (first raised in 1913). Only 1 record known from S.A. The species is sparingly naturalised in N.S.W., however, the taxon is not determined to variety-level in the *New South Wales Flora Online* (Wieczek 2013). Flowers: late winter–spring.

Leaves of the cultivated var. *atropurpurea* seem to be larger than in the typical variety, which are reported as being 10–35 mm long (Ohwi 1965). As only limited material was available, the description is largely based on Spencer (1997) and Whittemore (1997).

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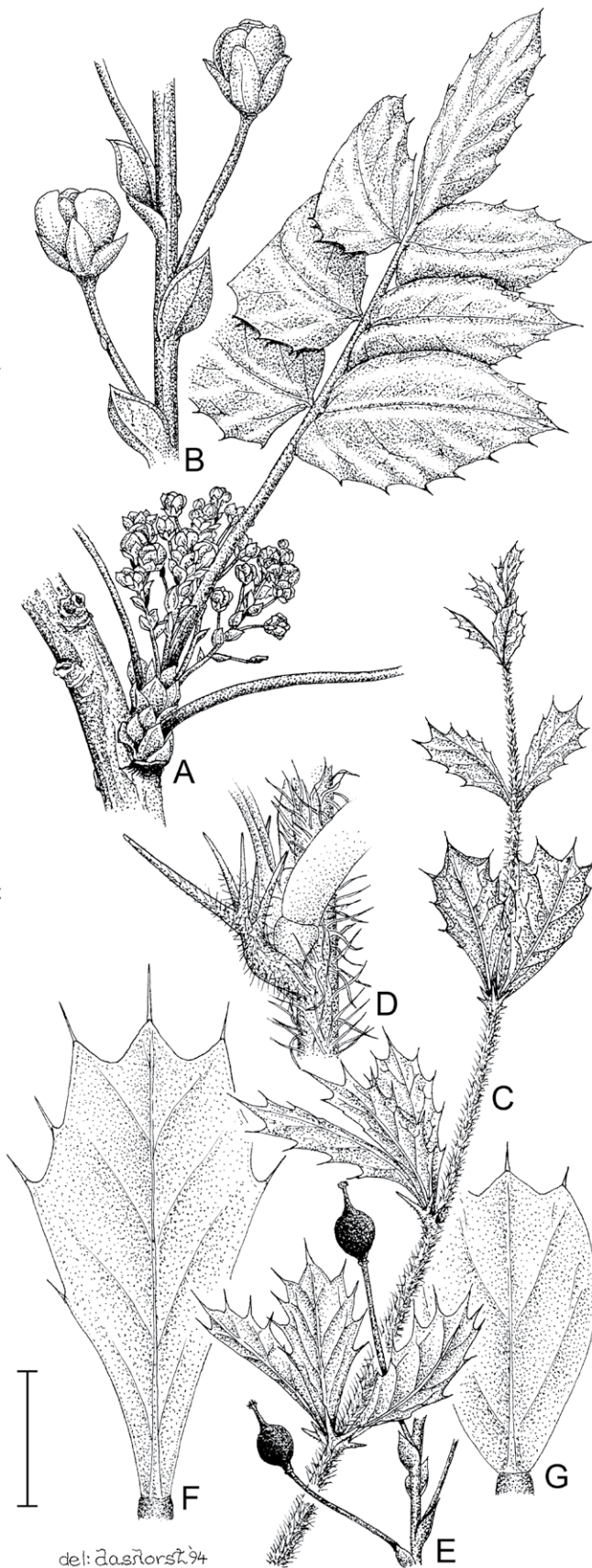


Fig. 1. A–B. *Berberis aquifolium*: A, flowering shoot; B, inflorescence bracts and bracteoles. **C–F. *B. darwinii*:** C, leafy shoot; D, axillary spur; E, fruits; F–G, leaves. Illustration by G.R.M. Dashorst, reproduced with permission from Morley & Wilson, *Flora of Australia* 2: 360, Fig. 68C–D, E–H (2007).



Pl. 1. *Berberis thunbergii* var. *atropurpurea*: flowering branch. Plant cultivated in Poland. Photo by Jerzy Opiota from Wikimedia.org.