Szechwan Barberry

Berberis sanguinea



Szechwan Barberry foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 8 feet

Spread: 8 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 6

Other Names: Red Chinese Barberry

Description:

A rarely found shrub featuring golden-yellow flowers with deep red bracts in spring, and scarlet fruit that progresses to blue-black; multifunctional, excellent used as a hedge; not very fussy about its growing conditions

Ornamental Features

Szechwan Barberry is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The fruits are showy red drupes which fade to black over time, which are carried in abundance from late summer to late fall. It is clothed in stunning clusters of gold flowers with red bracts along the branches in mid spring. It has dark green deciduous foliage. The serrated narrow leaves turn an outstanding red in the fall. The rough gray bark and tan branches add an interesting dimension to the landscape.

Landscape Attributes

Szechwan Barberry is a multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with a more or less rounded form. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and can be pruned at anytime. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering
- Spiny

Szechwan Barberry is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Szechwan Barberry will grow to be about 8 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 8 feet. It tends to fill out right to the ground and therefore doesn't necessarily require facer plants in front, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under average home landscape conditions. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America.

Szechwan Barberry makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.