



Japanese barberry



More Japanese barberry



A slew of thugs, including the yellow and white flowers of honeysuckle, porcelain vine, and others

in the garden

By **Karen Marks**, Resident Writer

GARDEN THUGS

Garden Thugs – Part Two

Here we are, once again, on the subject of garden thugs – this time reviewing trees, shrubs, and vines. I will touch on just a few that you should know about, but many more are out there.

Let's begin with trees. The infamous Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*), whose polynoses have been placed on every child's nose back in the day. Those polynoses fly through the air and sprout tenaciously into many more little trees. How many do you pull out in your yard?

Sumac (*Rhus typhphinia*), or as some describe it, Poison Sumac, is a relative of poison ivy. Need I say more? Although not everyone is allergic to it, those who are will suffer similar symptoms by contact with its evil cousin. Be warned.

The Mimosa tree (*Albizia julibrissin*), quite popular in the 1960s, is a fast-growing tree and notoriously short lived. After the silky pink flowers fade, many bean-like seed pods will grow and disperse the seeds for a new generation of Mimosas. They are guaranteed to grow wherever they land, even in the cracks of pavement. Lucky for us, in our garden zone, the mimosa has faded from our memories, as the cold winters have caused their demise. In the South, however, they continue to propagate with reckless abandon.

In the shrub category, you should be aware of many common plants that are now considered invasive. Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) is one of them. Their berries are eaten by birds and dispersed elsewhere. Although you see this common shrub, it should not be sold by any nursery. Aggressive imported shrubs can wipe out our less aggressive native plants, and that creates a less diverse environment.

Another shrub, commonly sold, is the Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*). As a child, the Rose of Sharon was able to germinate seeds all over our zoysia lawn! If you are familiar with zoysia, then you understand that is one determined seed. Every year, baby shrubs were popping up through our bulletproof lawn.

Today's new varieties of Rose of Sharon are now sterile, so you can enjoy those large hibiscus flowers in late summer without the fear of a takeover.

Vines, by nature, have a tendency to get into everything. By twining, and sprawling and attaching themselves to other plants or structures, vines can certainly get into trouble.

My top four vines in the garden thug category are Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) and Porcelain vine (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*). Now that is a mouthful! All of these vines are spread by our feathered friends, the birds. They all produce berries, considered luscious by birds, and are deposited by them wherever they see fit. Therefore, if left to berry, the chances are extremely good that you will be seeing many new seedlings showing up all over your garden. I cannot keep up with the porcelain vine seedlings in my yard, due to a large mass of it growing outside my property.

Last, but not least, is Bamboo (*Bambusa vulgaris*). At this point in time, I hope you all know just how dangerous this plant is, and that it is illegal to plant it. Nothing will stop its rampant growth.

As you can see, I've only touched on the broad subject of Garden Thugs.

If you are intrigued and would like to know more, please visit the website of invasive.org.



Karen Marks has been a Huntington Bay resident for the past 19 years. A passionate gardener with a gift for design, Karen has been creating in varied facets — store design, kitchen design, and garden design. She is also an active member of the Huntington Historical Society and Rescue Coordinator for Springer Spaniel Rescue (ESSCLI). You can visit her website at www.compleatgarden.com.