Critical Information on Barberry varieties - an excerpt from Rideau 1000 Islands Master Gardeners newsletter https://rideau1000islandsmastergardeners.com

“American Barberry [Berberis canadensis] is an under-used and under-appreciated plant in my opinion. It is native to southern Ontario and many of the mid-eastern states, however, it is quickly becoming extinct and increasingly hard to find. It can be used in a commercial landscape as a ground cover or massing as it has rhizomes that root into ground and are useful in preventing soil erosion. Although it is not the most appealing of plants because of its large spikes and un-interesting yellow flowers, the fruit of this plant is very useful. It was once used as a major source of nutrition in the States given its large amounts of Vitamin C and now the berries are used to make a jelly or pounded into something similar to oatmeal. You can even use these little red berries to make a tart-tasting alcohol. As this plant is one of the few native Barberries on the continent, it should be more commonly used."
World Plants, Michael Pascoe, Fanshawe College

Unfortunately, the barberries sold in nurseries aren't our native barberry, they're Japanese barberry (Berberis thunbergii). Because it's resistant to black stem rust, nurseries are allowed to sell Japanese barberry (which also has medicinal properties). Unfortunately Japanese barberry can also be extremely invasive.

How invasive? And why does this matter? Turns out that the deer ticks that spread Lyme disease also love Japanese Barberry.

Research by Dr. Scott Williams and Dr. Jeffrey Ward at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) revealed that barberry-infested forests are 12 times more likely to harbor the deer ticks that carry the Lyme disease pathogen than forests without barberry. "Barberry creates a perfect, humid environment for ticks. When we measure the presence of ticks carrying the Lyme spirochete (Borrelia burgdorferi) we find 120 infected ticks where Barberry is not contained, 40 ticks per acre where Barberry is contained, and only 10 infected ticks where there is no Barberry.” They found that controlling the Japanese barberry bushes in the forest cut the number of ticks by 80%.

Jeffrey Ward, from the Department of Forestry and Horticulture at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, says “You can see how it crowds out native plants, but it also does something else that’s not so obvious to the casual observer. Most people are surprised to learn that earthworms aren’t native to New England. The Barberry creates a perfect environment for them, and then they eat the leaf litter that’s important in maintaining healthy hydrologic conditions. These worms have big appetites and when the litter layer gets eaten we see gullies forming, sediment washing into streams, soil chemistry changing … all sorts of negatives that you don’t see in a healthy forest ecosystem.”

Think the cultivars are safe? Think again. Check out the list of 26 banned cultivars in Minnesota. The only completely safe cultivars are completely sterile cultivars.
Unfortunately nurseries in Ontario still sell Japanese Barberry, the web is full of articles on how to grow Japanese Barberry, and it's often promoted as as a good plant for Xeriscaping.

Manage Japanese Barberry to Keep Tick Levels Low
https://entomologytoday.org/2017/10/04/the-5-year-plan-manage-japanese-barberry-to-keep-tick-levels-low-reduce-lyme-risk/

Distinguishing North Carolinas Wild Barberries
https://bwwellsassociation.wordpress.com/2014/09/03/distinguishing-north-carolinas-wild-barberries/?mc_cid=7310904f83&mc_eid=60c1328758