Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) is a small, multi-stemmed, spiny shrub native to Japan and China. It was introduced to the U.S. in the 1860s. The shrub can reach 8 ft in height and can be as wide, although many cultivars are smaller. The leaves are simple, to about 1.25 inches long and in cultivars range from green to yellow to purplish. A single sharp spine occurs at each node. Small yellow flowers yield red berries in the fall. It tolerates pruning and can be formed into hedges. Used for landscaping, it escapes and forms dense thickets that replace native forest vegetation. It is also associated with high levels of ticks and tick diseases in many states.

**NATIVE ALTERNATIVES**

**VIRGINIA SWEETSPIRE (Itea virginica)**, is a small native shrub with arching stems growing in a mound to about 6 ft tall. In Kentucky, 4 inch long spikes of white flowers are produced in spring. Fruits are small and not showy. Green leaves turn red in the fall and often persist into early winter. Virginia sweetspire will grow in moist to average garden soil and prefers light shade, but does not tolerate very dry soils or full western or southern sun. The shrub is tolerant of light pruning.

**ARROWWOOD (Viburnum dentatum)**, is a deciduous shrub that grows in the range of 6-10 ft tall and wide, but can get slightly taller in optimal conditions. The common name comes from the historical use of its shoots as arrow shafts. This plant has coarsely toothed dark green leaves changing to a lovely fall display ranging from yellow, red, to red-purple. This shrub has flat-topped clusters of non-fragrant creamy white flowers in the late spring. Flowers attract several butterfly species and the plant is a larval food source for the spring azure butterfly and hummingbird moth. During summer and early fall, abundant blue to purplish black fruits ripen, which provide a great food source for birds. The structure of this shrub also provides cover and nesting potential for wildlife.

**BLACK CHOKEBERRY (Aronia melanocarpa)**, is a multi-stemmed shrub native to most of the eastern U.S. It grows to about 6 ft tall, occasionally 10 ft. It will grow in most garden soils, best in full sun or partial shade. In May, the shrub produces clusters of white flowers often tinged with pink. Black berries follow in the fall and will persist into early winter if not eaten by birds. The leaves turn shades of dark red and purple in the fall. This shrub establishes well from container stock, is resistant to pests, and tolerant of drought and pollution. The shrub naturally spreads well from container stock, is resistant to pests, and tolerant of drought and pollution. It is also associated with high levels of ticks and tick diseases in many states.

**PROMOTING ALTERNATIVES TO INVASIVE LANDSCAPE PLANTS**

To heighten awareness of invasive plants that threaten Kentucky’s native biodiversity, a Least Wanted plant will be featured in the spring of each year with suggested alternatives.