



# MAINE INVASIVE PLANTS

## Multiflora Rose, Rambler Rose

### *Rosa multiflora* (Rose Family)

#### Threats to Native Habitats

Multiflora rose is an aggressive colonizer of open unplowed land and is highly successful on forest edges. This prolific seed producer can create extremely dense, impenetrable thickets that crowd out other vegetation and inhibit regrowth of native plants. Associated vegetation of multiflora rose thickets is often limited to a few tree stems that have managed to overtop the rose before the thicket developed. Dense stands of multiflora rose can slow down forest regeneration: the species can dominate a forest understory. Anyone who has attempted to traverse a thicket of this plant would have few kind words for it, as its interweaving, abundantly-thorned branches snag on clothes and hair and can be quite painful. Large populations are sometimes associated with former plantings, but the plant has naturalized throughout much of the United States and continues to be spread with the help of birds.

#### Description

Multiflora rose is a robust perennial shrub with thorny arching stems. It has alternately arranged compound leaves, generally with seven or nine leaflets. It forms large clusters of fragrant white or pink flowers that bloom from June to July. Like other roses, it forms small red pulpy fruits called hips, which may be eaten by birds. It reproduces from seeds or by rooting at the tip of arching stems that touch the ground. It can be distinguished from native roses by its long arching stems and numerous small white flowers or hips depending on the season. To verify identification of this plant contact a natural resources professional.

#### Habitat

Multiflora rose prefers old fields, fencerows, power lines, roadsides, and forest edges. In other parts of its range it is successful in the understory of hardwood forests. It tolerates both moist and relatively dry conditions.



*Multiflora Roses (photos by the Maine Natural Areas Program, and John A. Lynch, courtesy of the New England Wild Flower Society)*

#### Distribution

Multiflora rose is native to eastern Asia. It was brought to North America in the late nineteenth century to be used in horticultural plantings. Since then it has been widely planted for a variety of reasons, including wildlife food and cover, erosion control, and as a living fence to border properties or pen livestock. Its use was historically advocated by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service and by some state conservation departments. Multiflora rose is now naturalized (established and reproducing in the wild) throughout much of the United States. In Maine, it is documented in Oxford, Waldo, and York Counties, but likely occurs in more.

## Control

The best method of controlling multiflora rose is to prevent it from becoming established in the first place. It should be removed as soon as possible if it is found colonizing an area. Repeated mowing—at least six cuts per year near the ground for two or more years—can successfully eliminate light infestations. In areas where thickets have formed it may be necessary to use a bulldozer to remove the plants. Coarse mechanical removal by bulldozer or otherwise must be followed by removal of root sprouts or new growth from the seedbank if reinfestation is to be prevented. The herbicides glyphosate and triclopyr are also effective. Use a 2% solution of glyphosate or triclopyr mixed with a 0.5% surfactant, and thoroughly wet the leaves. To aid in the absorption of the herbicide apply when temperatures are greater than 65 degrees F. Herbicides can also be used in combination with mechanical treatments or as follow-up to a burn. Consult a licensed herbicide applicator before applying herbicides over large areas.

## References:

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- Gleason, H.A. and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. New York: New York Botanical Garden.

**For more information or for a more extensive list of references on invasive species contact:**

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