

Multiflora Rose

Rosa multiflora

Rose Family (Rosaceae)



What does it look like? Multiflora rose, native to Japan, is a perennial shrub with pinnately compound leaves. The fragrant flowers are white to pinkish-white 1/2 in. to 1 in. in diameter, with numerous stamens. The pistils are long, forming a protruding column from the center of the flower. The fruit, known as rose hips, are bright red, globular and fleshy. The stems of a typical plant are 3 in. to 5 in. long with a drooping form.

What habitats are threatened by this plant? Multiflora rose grows best in deep, fertile, well-drained moist uplands and bottomlands. Multiflora rose is capable of enduring a wide range of environmental conditions. It endures shade, sun, damp and/or dry conditions, but does not grow well in standing water. Multiflora rose is most commonly seen growing in mangled clumps in old fields, pastures and hedgerows.

How does this plant spread? Flowering begins in May, and the fruits develop in mid- to late summer. The rose hips dry gradually to form leathery capsules, which are highly attractive to birds. Germination of the seed is better if it is scarified by passing through the digestive track of the bird. Seeds remain viable for a number of years. Multiflora rose is spread primarily by seeds (via birds) and by rooting at the tips of its drooping canes.

Where is this plant found in the United States? The plant originally was introduced to the East Coast from Japan in 1886 as an understock for ornamental roses. In the 1930's, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service advocated the use of multiflora rose for soil erosion projects. Rooted cuttings were distributed to property owners as recently as the late 1960's by state conservation services. Multiflora rose was planted for hedgerows on farmland, and as crash barriers to reduce headlight glare in the medians of highways. This plant can be found everywhere in the Northeast and Midwest, with the exception of the Rocky Mountains, Southeastern Coastal plains and the Nevada and California deserts.

How can it be controlled? Regular mowing inhibits seedling establishment in grassy areas. Medium to large shrubs can be removed with a weed-pulling tool, such as a Weed Wrench, or dug out by hand after the thorny tops have been cut away. If digging is not practical, cut and treat the stump with a glyphosate herbicide, such as Roundup, to prevent re-sprouting. Follow label directions when applying any herbicide.

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