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Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas

Swearingen, J., K. Reshetiloff, B. Slattery, and S. Zwicker. 2002. Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas. National Park Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 82 pp.



James H. Miller

Multiflora Rose

Rosa multiflora

Origin: Japan, Korea and Eastern China

Background

Multiflora rose was introduced to the eastern United States in 1866 as rootstock for ornamental roses. Beginning in the 1930s, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service promoted it for use in erosion control and as "living fences" to confine livestock. State conservation departments recommended multiflora rose as cover for wildlife. More recently, multiflora rose has been planted in highway median strips to

serve as crash barriers and to reduce automobile headlight glare. Its tenacious growth habit was eventually recognized as a problem on pastures and unplowed lands, where it disrupted cattle grazing, and, more recently, as a pest of natural ecosystems. It is designated a noxious weed in several states, including Iowa, Ohio, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Distribution and Ecological Threat

Multiflora rose occurs throughout the eastern half of the United States and in Washington and Oregon. It tolerates a wide range of soil, moisture and light conditions and is able to invade fields, forests, prairies, some wetlands and many other habitats. Multiflora rose grows aggressively and produces large numbers of fruits (hips) that are eaten and dispersed by a variety of birds. Dense thickets of multiflora rose exclude most native shrubs and herbs from establishing and may be detrimental to nesting of native birds.



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Description and Biology

- Plant: a thorny, perennial shrub with arching stems.
- Leaves: divided in five to eleven sharply toothed leaflets; base of each leaf stalk bears a pair of small fringed structures (stipules).
- Flowers, fruits and seeds: clusters of showy, fragrant, white to pinkish, 1 inch wide flowers appear during May; small bright red fruits, or rose hips, develop during the summer and remain on the plant through the winter.
- Spreads: reproduces by seed and by forming new plants from the tips of arching canes that can root where they contact the ground. An average plant produces an estimated one million seeds per year, which remain viable in the soil for up to 20 years.
- Look-alikes: pasture rose (*Rosa carolina*); swamp rose (*Rosa palustris*); Allegheny blackberry (*Rubus allegheniensis*); flowering raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*). Only multiflora rose has the

combination of upright arching stems and fringed stipules.

Prevention and Control

Young plants may be pulled by hand. Mature plants can be controlled through frequent, repeated cutting or mowing. Several contact and systemic herbicides are also effective in controlling multiflora rose. Follow-up treatments are likely to be needed. Two naturally occurring biological controls affect multiflora rose to some extent: a native fungal pathogen (rose-rosette disease) that is spread by a tiny native mite and a non-native seed-infesting wasp, the European rose chalcid.

Native Alternatives

common blackberry (*Rubus allegheniensis*)



Chris Miller, NRCS

swamp rose (*Rosa palustris*)



Chris Miller, NRCS

flowering raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*)



R. Harrison Wiegand

pasture rose (*Rosa carolina*)



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