

MULTIFLORA ROSE

Rosa multiflora



Multiflora Rose

Multiflora rose is a Pennsylvania state listed noxious weed with nationwide distribution. Prior to being declared illegal to sell multiflora rose was a legitimate crop species in PA and the nation. Multiflora rose is capable of forming a monoculture in all habitats, displacing native or beneficial plants. It significantly reduces crop quality, pasture productivity, interferes with harvesting, and is a host for a pathogen rose rosette disease.

History

Multiflora rose is just one of many roses within the *Rosa* genus. In the United States there are more than 100 species and 84 accepted taxa in this genus. At least 12 species can be found in PA. After the fall of the Roman empire, roses were transported to southern France by Benedictine monks. By 1817, this rose was found through out much of the continental Europe and later became the parent of the multiflora ramblers.

Multiflora rose has been hybridized with many cultivated roses. It was also promoted and planted nationwide on highly erodible ground to slow erosion. Unfortunately, due to its prolific seed production via bird dispersal, it quickly escaped cultivation.

Multiflora Rose in Pennsylvania

Multiflora rose was purposefully introduced in PA in the 1930's as root stock for ornamental roses (grafting) and as a agricultural species for erosion control and wildlife habitat restoration. It was distributed by the USDA, the PA Game Commission and the PA Bureau of Forestry during the 1930's through the 1960's. By the time the species invasive tendencies became known, thousands of acres had been overrun by this species.

Several varieties of *Rosa multiflora* have been formally named. The typical form with small, single white flowers originating in Japan and Korea has been designated *R. multiflora* Thunb. var *Thunbergiana*.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture included multiflora rose in the PA Noxious Weed Control Act in 1982 declaring it a state noxious weed.

Multiflora Rose Program

There is no state regulatory assistance program for control of multiflora rose. Because of its ability to take over cropland and non-cropland areas and the injury the thorns cause animals and humans, it is one of the more frequent **Noxious Weed Complaint's** that the Department of Agriculture processes on an annual basis.

The Secretary of Agriculture may issue a **Noxious Weed Control Order** to an individual landowner requiring they implement measures to control multiflora rose brambles along property lines and to protect cropland from becoming infested by seed dispersal from nearby infested areas.

How You Can Help

All properties owners should manage multiflora rose infestations on a yearly basis to prevent sprouting shoots from becoming mature shrubs. Once seeds are produced birds and wildlife will distribute the seeds throughout the area. Several herbicides will kill multiflora rose as will repeated mowing. A natural occurring pathogen called rose rosette disease is now common in PA and is killing multiflora rose and ornamental *Rosa* genus plants.





James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Multiflora rose's fringed petiole.



James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

UGA 23

Multiflora rose berry-like bright red hips



Rae Chambers, Pennsylvania State University, Bugwood.org

UGA0002152

Diagram of the multiflora rose bushy growth

Multiflora Rose Description

Multiflora rose is a perennial member of the Rosaceae or rose family.

It is a commonly found wild shrub with climbing stems covered with curved thorns.

Bushes can range in height from 3 ft to 10 ft.

Leaves are alternate and compound. They are made up of 7-9 leaflets which are 0.5" to 1" in length. The leaflets are elliptic to obovate in shape.

Stems are climbing, scrambling, or trailing. They are covered with very sharp curved thorns similar in size, appearance to cat claws.

Flowers are white to pale-pink in color, usually with 5 petals. They are grouped in many terminal panicles. Flowering occurs from May until June.

Seeds are achenes that are formed inside of red berrylike hips. The hips bear 1 to 3 mature seeds. Hips persist on the stems even after snow begins to fall.

Roots are fibrous and vigorous. Roots can be formed when a stem

(canes) comes into contact with the ground.

Similar species

There are many ornamental hybrids, varieties and cultivars that originate from *multiflora* parent stock. However, the plant *multiflora rose* Thunb. is the species that was planted as a soil erosion/wildlife plant in PA and it is easily

identified by its small clusters of white-pink flowers. Some species such as **pasture rose**, **swamp rose**, and **prairie rose** can be confused with multiflora rose especially when the plant has pink flowers. However, none of these species have fringed petioles and the thorns are not similar.

Biology/Ecology

Multiflora rose reproduces by seeds or by cane rooting. Plants thrive in all soil types and fertility levels and are commonly found in idled cropland. Infestations, especially old growth sites, form impenetrable thickets due to arching stems and thorns.



John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org

Multiflora Rose Leaf

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Barry Rice, saraccenia.com, Bugwood.org

Multiflora Rose stem and thorns



<http://www.weeds.iastate.edu/>

Pink color of rose rosette disease

Rose rosette disease has infected much of the multiflora rose in PA since the 1980's. It is now quite common to see the distinctive "red" canes and leaves that indi-

cate the plant has been attacked by the mite that transmits the virus. Since it is not host specific, this naturally occurring virus also kills other ornamental *Rosa* species.