

INVASIVE PLANTS OF OHIO

Fact Sheet 8

Multiflora Rose

Rosa multiflora



John Watts

DESCRIPTION:

Multiflora rose is a thorny, non-native perennial shrub with arching branches that can form dense thickets. Its compound leaves grow alternately and consist of 5-11 sharply toothed, oval leaflets. The stipules at the base of the leaf are feathery and characteristic of this plant. Multiflora rose produces many clusters of 1 inch-wide, white flowers in the late spring. Small, bright red fruits (rose hips) develop during the summer and remain on the plant throughout the winter.

HABITAT:

Multiflora rose prefers sunny areas and well-drained soils, but can tolerate a wide range of habitats. This plant readily invades open woodlands, forest edges, successional fields, savannas and prairies. Once established, multiflora rose grows rapidly forming dense, impenetrable thickets.

DISTRIBUTION:

Multiflora rose was introduced from Japan, Korea and eastern China in the 1860s as rootstock for ornamental roses. In the 1930s, it was widely promoted as a "living fence" for soil conservation and in wildlife programs. It is found throughout the United States with the exception of the Rocky Mountains, southeastern coastal plains and western desert areas. In Ohio, multiflora rose has a widespread distribution in pastures, woodlots and non-crop lands.

PROBLEM:

Thickets of multiflora rose can successfully displace native plant species. Multiflora rose reproduces from seed and by rooting from the arching stems. It has been estimated that an average plant produces a million seeds per year, which may remain viable in the soil for up to twenty years.



Division Photo

CONTROL:

Mechanical: Light multiflora rose infestations can be eradicated using a shovel, provided the entire root system is removed. For control of more severe invasions, mowing or cutting several times per growing season for 2-4 years can be effective. In some situations, a prescribed burn during the early growing season may be an appropriate method for controlling severe infestations.

Chemical: Applying systemic herbicides, such as Roundup®, Glypro®, or Garlon 4® directly to fresh cut stumps or as a basal bark application is the most effective control method. Roundup®, Glypro®, or Garlon 3A® may also be applied to the foliage.

Biological: Rose rosette disease, a natural pest on multiflora rose, was first found Ohio in 1987. Symptoms include red and purplish vein mosaics and dwarfed foliage. A virus is transmitted by a tiny mite and on average plants die within two years of infection. Efforts to introduce the disease into uninfected areas have proven difficult, but research in the area of additional biological control is ongoing and may provide a more promising control agent.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES:

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