

Invasive Plants Fact Sheet



Multiflora rose *Rosa multiflora* Thunb. Rose Family (Rosaceae)

Status: Common and invasive in Connecticut.

Description: Multiflora rose is a shrub with nine- to twelve-foot-long arching stems (canes) rising directly from the ground. These stems are generously studded with stiff thorns. Leaves are usually made up of seven or nine leaflets, each sharply toothed. The stipule, which is the covering at the base of each leaf, is deeply fringed. The plant produces clusters of fragrant white (or occasionally pink) flowers three-quarters of an inch to one-and-a-half inches across, which are replaced by red rose hips (fruit).

Preferred habitat: This plant is abundant in pastures, reverting fields, and roadsides. It has been planted as a "living fence" to control livestock, to stabilize soil, and to create barriers for highways. Multiflora rose endures a wide range of soil and environmental conditions, preferring sunny areas and well-drained soils. Seasonal cycle: Multiflora rose is a perennial shrub that flowers in May or June in Connecticut; fruits (hips) develop in the late summer. The plant reproduces by seed as well as by rooting at the tips of the drooping canes. Although the leaves drop off each fall, the stems persist through winter and releaf in the spring.

Distribution: Native to eastern Asia, multiflora rose is a common, naturalized pasture weed in most of the northeastern and midwestern United States. It is found throughout the United States with the exception of the Rocky Mountain area, southeastern coastal plains, and the Nevada and California desert areas. Other points of interest: Multiflora rose is named for the clusters of many white or occasionally pink flowers borne on this bramble during May or June. It was introduced to the United States for wildlife cover and food, and has now become a serious invader of agricultural lands, pastures, and natural areas. Its dense growing habit prevents establishment of native plant species. The great majority of plants develops from seeds, which remain viable in the soil for ten to twenty years. Birds and mammals consume the fruits, dispersing seeds over great distances. Rose hips are an important winter food for many birds, including mockingbirds, bluebirds, wintering robins, cedar waxwings, etc.

Control: Cutting three to six times per growing season for several years can be effective in controlling this species. Herbicide application is also possible, particularly application to regrowth of cut material. The application of glyphosate (Roundup™) has been successful when used as a 1% volume/volume (v/v) solution or as a 0.5% v/v with the addition of a surfactant (soap). The herbicide should be applied in the fall to kill the root and stem. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide and great care should be taken in its usage. Biological control methods are currently being explored, but are not yet available. Additional information sources: Gray's Manual of Botany. Eighth edition, corrected printing. M. Fernald. D. Van Nostrand Company, New York, 1970. A Literature Review of Management Practices for Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*). J. Evans. Natural Area Journal 3 (1), 1983. Vegetation Management Guideline: Multiflora Rose

(*Rosa multiflora* Thunb.). R. Szafoni Natural Areas Journal 3 (4), 1991. Common Weeds of the United States. Dover Press, 1971. Diagnostic information: Leaves: Pinnately compound, between 5 and 11 leaflets per leaf, each leaflet broadly oval, less than 1-1/2" long. Flowers: White to pinkish-white (1" in diam.); 25-100 stamens found in long or pointed panicle. Fruit: Red; globular to ovoid; somewhat fleshy. Stems and branches: 9'-12' long, first 6' erect and tips arching close to ground. This fact sheet has been prepared by The Nature Conservancy Connecticut Chapter in cooperation with The Natural Diversity Data Base of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. It may be reproduced without permission.

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