

Multiflora Rose

Rosa Multiflora

Background: Multiflora rose was introduced into the U.S. as rootstock for ornamental roses in the late 1800's. By the 1930's, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service was advocating its use in erosion control and as "living fences" to confine livestock. Ironically, this shrub really has it out for cattle – not only does it smother their food but it emits a toxin that irritates their skin and eyes! Fortunately, it has since been recognized as a harmful invasive and is now classified as a noxious weed in several states (USDA-NRCS, 2006*).



Identification: Multiflora rose is a perennial shrub that has curved thorns and leaves made up of five to eleven toothed leaflets. Small, fringed stipules at the base of each leaf stalk distinguish this invader from similar native varieties. Clusters of sweet-smelling white or pink flowers appear in late spring. By September small bright red fruits develop and remain through winter. It grows aggressively, quickly covering the ground and displacing native grasses and shrubs.

Control: Repeated cutting or mowing of large areas is suggested. Seedlings can be pulled and small plants can be dug out. Multiflora Rose reproduces through the dispersal of its berries or seeds. The seeds are viable for up to 20 years (!) so it is important to bag the plant after pulling or cutting, especially in the fall or winter. It may also be necessary to follow-up removal for years to ensure it does not return and take over! Landscaping with native shrubs and trees greatly reduces the chance of invasion of this species.

Some lovely native vine alternatives include:

pasture rose (*Rosa carolina*), wild rose (*Rosa virginiana*), swamp rose (*Rosa palustris*), and flowering raspberry (*Rubus Odoratus*)

*source: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ROMU>

Photo source: University of Cincinnati Clermont College database at biology.clc.uc.edu (budding Multiflora Rose), database for a joint project of the University of Georgia and the USDA Forest Service at forestryimages.org (Multiflora Rose in fruit), database for the National Park Service, nps.gov (Purple flowering raspberry)



Purple Flowering Raspberry