

Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora* Thunberg)

Description

Multiflora rose is a perennial, thorny shrub of medium height. Its arching or trailing stems can root at the tip, forming dense thickets. The compound leaves alternate along the stems; each leaf has 5-11 oval leaflets, the edges of which are toothed. In late spring, multiflora rose blooms in tapering clusters of white flowers. As in other rose species, the fruits are small, red hips. The seeds found in the hips of multiflora rose are sought after by many different bird species during winter.

Habitat

Usually found in fields, pastures and along roadsides, multiflora rose can also appear in dense forest where fallen trees have opened a gap in the forest canopy. It is adaptable to a wide range of environments but is not found in standing water or in extremely dry habitats.

Distribution

Multiflora rose is native to Asia and was brought to the United States from Japan in the 1880s by horticulturists. Later, wildlife managers planted it for wildlife food and cover. Once used for control of soil erosion and on highway medians to reduce headlight glare, multiflora rose is now found throughout most

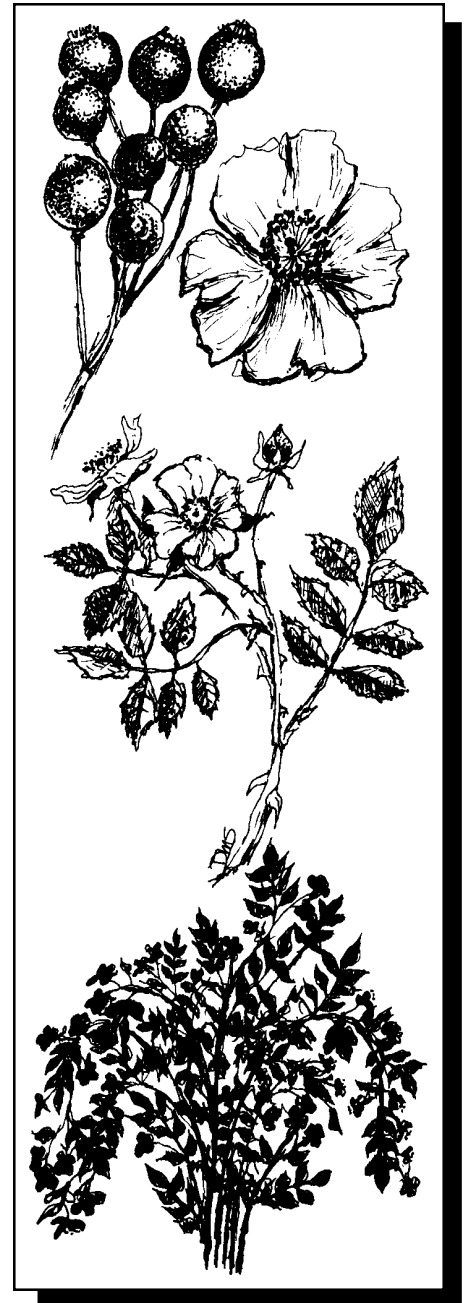
of the United States. It has established itself in all but a dozen counties of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has listed this plant as a noxious weed.

Threats

Multiflora rose forms dense thickets which can choke out native plant species. These thickets act as living fences, impenetrable by man or large animals. Results from studies done on multiflora rose suggest it is highly competitive for soil nutrients.

Control

Lightly infested areas may be cleared with a shovel or grubbing hoe provided the entire root is removed. Severe infestations of multiflora rose are effectively controlled by mowing or cutting. However, this treatment must be repeated 3-6 times a year for 2-4 years. Applying a glyphosate herbicide directly to freshly cut stumps helps insure kill of the root system. This method is most effective if done late in the growing season. Foliar application of a glyphosate herbicide will also kill multiflora rose. Glyphosate herbicides are recommended because they are biodegradable. However, glyphosate is a nonselective, systemic herbicide and will affect all



Multiflora Rose (Rosa multiflora Thunberg)

For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation or the Virginia Native Plant Society.



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Virginia Native Plant Society

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Jim Gilmore, Governor • John Paul Woodley, Jr., Secretary of Natural Resources • David G. Brickley, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation

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green vegetation. To be safe and effective, herbicide use requires careful knowledge of the chemicals, appropriate concentrations, and the effective method and timing of application. Consult a natural resource specialist or agricultural extension agent for more information before attempting any herbicide control program.

In some situations, a prescribed burn during the early growing season may be an appropriate method for controlling severe infestations of multiflora rose. As with mechanical control methods, follow-up burn

treatments may be necessary for several years to remove plants sprouting from stems or seed. Seek the advice of an agricultural extension agent or natural resource specialist before implementing this control method.

Suggested Alternatives

Some native shrubs with attractive flowers and/or fruit production useful to wildlife include Carolina rose (*Rosa carolina*), high-bush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), black haw (*Viburnum prunifolia*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) and American holly (*Ilex opaca*) (dioe-

cious, female plant for fruit). These species should be available at most large nurseries and garden centers.

References

Evans, J. and N. Ekhardt. 1987. Element Stewardship Abstract: *Rosa multiflora*. The Nature Conservancy, Minneapolis.

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Harvill, A., et al. 1992. Atlas of Virginia Flora. Virginia Botanical Association, Burkesville.

Illustration by Donna Smith

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