



Managing Multiflora Rose

Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) is an invasive shrub that can develop into impenetrable, thorny thickets. It has the distinction of being among the first plants to be named to Pennsylvania's Noxious Weed List. This plant was introduced from Asia and widely promoted as a 'living fence' to provide erosion control and as a food and cover source for wildlife. Multiflora rose does provide cover and some food value with its fleshy fruit (called 'hips'), but its overall effect on habitat value is negative. Multiflora rose is very aggressive, and crowds planted grasses, forbs, and trees established on CREP acres to enhance wildlife habitat.

Telling Bad Rose from Good

There are at least 13 species of rose that grow 'wild' in Pennsylvania, and most of them are desirable in a wildlife habitat planting. Multiflora rose is readily distinguished from other roses by two features - its white-to-pinkish, five-petaled flowers occur in branched clusters, and the base of the leaf where it attaches to the thorny stem is fringed (Figure 1). Memorial rose (*Rosa wichuraiana*) is the only other species with a fringed leaf base, but its flowers are borne singly.

Individual plants can easily grow to more than 10 feet tall and 10 feet wide. When they grow singly, multiflora rose plants have a mounded form because of their arching stems (Figure 2). When the tips of the stems touch the ground, they can take root (called *layering*) and form a new crown. If near trees, the rose behaves almost like a vine, and can grow 20 feet into the tree.



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Figure 2. Multiflora rose in whole-plant view, with its mounded form from arching stems, and cascades of showy, white-to-pinkish blooms.



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Figure 1: Two features that distinguish multiflora rose from the other rose species that grow in Pennsylvania are the flowers that appear in branched clusters, and the fringed base of the compound leaf (inset).

Multiflora rose breaks bud early in the spring, quickly developing a full canopy of compound leaves that have seven to nine leaflets. Peak bloom is in early June. Birds and browsing animals eat the fleshy, bright red hips and the seeds pass through their digestive systems intact. These seeds can remain viable in the soil up to 20 years.

Multiflora Rose Control Measures

A single-method control approach will not eradicate a multiflora rose infestation. Like other invasive species, a combination of control tactics is necessary to manage this plant.

Finding multiflora rose early is the best way to simplify control. Controlling rose as small, scattered plants is much easier than trying to eliminate established thickets. Vigorous, competitive vegetation greatly aids control as well.

Brush mowers, or similar equipment can be used to cut and pulverize the top growth of established plants. Mowing alone will not control multiflora rose, but it is a great way to make it easier to treat the plant with herbicides. Top growth of smaller plants can be removed with conventional mowing equipment.

Herbicides can be applied to rose foliage or to the stems. Applications to foliage can be spot-applied with a hydraulic sprayer with a handgun, mounted on an ATV, tractor, or truck; or a backpack sprayer. In a grassland planting, treatments of the herbicide Cimmaron (*metsulfuron*) mixed at

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