

multiflora rose

Rosa multiflora

Identification:

Rosaceae (Rose family)

Common Perennial shrub, deciduous **Height:** 4-8' **Width:** 9-13' **Leaf Arrangement:** alternate
Flower: White **Blooms:** Late spring to Early summer **Fruit:** Red hip **Fall Color:** Yellow

Multiflora (MR) rose gets its name from the clusters of quarter-sized, white, five-petaled flowers which bloom from late spring to early summer. Red, pea-sized rose hips persist into winter. These flowers and fruit are much smaller, but more numerous, than those of native roses. It is typically 3-6' tall with arching, smooth, green branches with large, sturdy, curved thorns. Leaves are compound, with 5-9 (typically 7), leaflets. All roses have a small flap of leafy material called a stipule at the base of each leaf. In multiflora rose, the stipule is formed of hair-like teeth. In our native roses the stipule is a solid, largely-untoothed, flap. Generally, our native upland roses have *straight* thorns or bristles, with fewer, leaflets (typically 5, up to 7), that are larger than those of MR.



Weed Information Sheet:

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Rosa multiflora



NR-40 Restricted

AKA:

Description & Impact:

Multiflora rose is an invasive shrub introduced to North America in the mid-20th century in a misguided effort to create “living fences” and for wildlife food. Never mind the fact that our native roses, raspberries and other shrubs already do this very well. MR began to spread rapidly and it now proliferates anywhere from woodlands to hedgerows to open fields. This species’ arching structure and sharp, stout, recurved thorns catch on clothes and skin, causing injury and making travel in natural areas difficult. Fortunately, indigenous insects and diseases have started impacting MR populations, so they are less of a threat to ecosystems than they at first appeared. However, they still displace native plants, and are physically hazardous to people and wildlife traveling through the natural areas where they exist.

Control Methods:

When dealing with MR, wear full-coverage, thick clothing and face protection to prevent injury from the sharp thorns. When cutting multiflora rose down it is best to use brush cutters or mowers, as using hand tools requires too-much close contact.

Cutting and Treating stumps with herbicide is the most effective method of control. Cut the stems down as close to the ground as possible, then apply concentrated herbicide to the stump. Triclopyr (Garlon® 4) is the most effective for cut-stump, glyphosate (Round-Up® etc.) or imazapyr (Polaris®, Arsenal®) will work as well. Triclopyr (amine formulation) or imazapyr mixed in mineral oil can be used for basal bark applications. For large populations or management in open fields, mow MR in late-spring when they begin to flower, then apply a foliar application of any of the above-mentioned herbicides to resprouting vegetation. For robust populations you may wish to mow repeatedly over a growing season and apply the foliar herbicide application in the fall. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and apply according to the instruction on the product label.

Digging out the root crown can be effective at killing a MR plant, but is labor-intensive at scale, and causes considerable soil disturbance.

Mowing: Repeated cutting or mowing may allow you to exhaust the root energy stores. This may be the most efficient approach to start with for large infestations such as pastures. Begin mowing in spring during flowering when the plant’s energy reserves are lowest, and repeat 3-5 times per year until the MR fails to resprout. This may take 2 or more growing seasons. For plants that refuse to die after repeated mowing, try smothering with cardboard and a hearty pile of mulch.

Prescribed fire is important in natural areas to prevent the establishment of this species and help control, but not eliminate individuals that are already established.

Revegetation Recommendations: Pasture rose (*Rosa carolina*), early wild rose (*Rosa blanda*) and Illinois rose (*Rosa setigera*) are all beautiful native roses with large, pink open-faced flowers. These species are lower-growing than multiflora rose. Black raspberries (*Rubus occidentalis*), common raspberry (*R. idaeus* var. *strigosus*) and blackberries (*R. allegheniensis*) are thorny native brambles that could be used as a “living fence”, and also produce delicious fruit.

Citations: UW Cooperative Extension, Management of invasive plants in Wisconsin: Multiflora Rose (A3924-20)