Multiflora Rose

Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora)* was introduced from Asia in the 1880s as an ornamental. Multiflora rose is a woody shrub creating dense thickets by layering, and it can reach fifteen feet tall. It will also find its way up tree trunks, often mixed with Asiatic bittersweet and/or bull briar. It has abundant sharp thorns which maintain their sharpness even on dead canes. Multiflora rose is one of the first plants to get its leaves in early spring, making it easy to spot. The leaves are pinnately compound, ovate, and toothed. The plant will have prolific 5-petal flowers which are white or light pink with yellow pollen. The fruits are red hips in clusters. A mature plant may produce hundreds of thousands of seeds which are reported to remain viable up to twenty years. The seeds are carried over into the next growing season, providing food for birds which then scatter the seeds. Propagation is primarily by seed. However, canes which come in contact with the ground may form roots at the point of contact and then grow from that new root location. Eradication is a multi-year project.

Five-petal flower   Hips

Typical thorns   Typical Plant

Control

Multiflora rose is difficult to eradicate due to its vitality, its size, and its seed bank. A combination of mechanical and chemical methods should be considered.

Mechanical Control

Wear gloves and protective clothing! Small plants are easily pulled. Large plants are more challenging. Mowing larger plants will reduce their vitality, allowing more control in the years ahead. Repeated mowing will eventually exhaust the rootstock, but vigilance will be required to monitor for re-infestation from the seed bank.

Chemical Control

After mowing, allow the plant to grow back to knee height, then apply a foliar spray. Glyphosate and triclopyr are effective foliar sprays; care should be taken to avoid spraying non-target species. In late summer or early fall, herbicide can also be applied directly to the cut stems after mowing.