Multiflora Rose
(Rosa multiflora Thunb. ex Murr.)
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Problems Caused
Multiflora rose or Japanese rose (Rosa multiflora Thunb. ex Murr.) [Syn. Rosa cathayensis (Rehd. & Wilson) Bailey] is a shrub native to Japan and Korea. It was introduced into cultivation in 1868 and escaped. It has been used for ‘living fences’ and wildlife habitat. It can be problematic in all Midsouth states, especially in pastures. The presence of prickles on stems and leaves are most likely a deterrent for grazing livestock. It is still used as a rootstock for certain cultivated roses and apparently resistant to certain diseases such as black spot. However, it is a host to some viral diseases which can be vectored to cultivated roses.

Regulations
It is Noxious in Alabama, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. It is Banned in Connecticut and Prohibited in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. A permit is required in Indiana and it is Regulated as a non-native plant species in South Dakota and a Nuisance weed in Wisconsin.

Description
Vegetative Growth
Multiflora rose is an erect, arching, deciduous shrub. Stems and leaves have short, recurved prickles, except in the cultivar ‘Inermis’. Shrubs may reach 15’ high by 15’ wide, but are generally much smaller. Leaves are alternate and odd-pinnate with 7 to 9 leaflets (Figure 2). The stem (rachis) is Leaflets tend to be glabrous above and pubescent beneath. Each leaflet is obovate to elliptic and 0.5” to 2” long by 0.5” to just over 1” wide. Margins are generally serrate. Stipules pectinate; fused to petiole for about 0.1” to 0.6” then free about 0.1” to 0.3”.

Flowering
Flowers are clustered (Figure 1) in a bracteate raceme-like corymb or panicle with bracts (leaflike structures) promptly deciduous. Flowering occurs in spring from May to June and then sparingly from September to October. There are five sepals which are glabrous to pubescent and lanceolate, 1.5” to 2.5” long. The five petals are typically white (pink in Rosa multiflora var. cathayensis and R. multiflora ‘Platyphylla’); 0.4” to 0.6” long (Figure 1). The hypanthium, sometimes called the ‘fruit’ or ‘hip’, at first green then maturing red; ellipsoid to ovoid in shape, 0.2” to 0.3” long. The hips occur in clusters. Inside the hips are approximately 7 achenes (true fruit which contain a seed) which are about 0.1” long and densely pubescent.

Dispersal
Individual plants may produce up to 500,000 seeds (or achenes) per year. Most seedlings will emerge near the parent plant. However, many species of birds and mammals feed on the hips, widely dispersing the seeds. Despite this dispersal mechanism, wildlife food value is considered low to minor. Stems that come into contact with the soil can root. The impact of its use as a rootstock for cultivated roses upon its spread in the United States is not clear. Its use for ornament, wildlife, and hedges has most likely lead to invasions in certain areas of the United States.

Spread By
Multiflora rose is spread primarily by birds, mammals, and humans.

Habitat
Multiflora rose is a problem in pastures, fence rows, prairies, forest and roadside margins, and open woodlands (Figure 3). It can form dense thickets, replacing the surrounding native vegetation. Although these thickets may provide habitat for certain wildlife, they are a difficult barrier for human activity.
**Distribution**

**US**
Multiflora rose is widespread in the United States, but apparently not escaped in some western plains and Rocky Mountain states. It occurs in states along the west coast and from Minnesota to New Mexico east. In the right habitat it occurs in eastern states.

**Mid-South**
Multiflora rose has escaped in all Mid-South states.

**Control Methods**

**Biological**
Although multiflora rose is susceptible to certain diseases, no widespread use of biological controls is practiced.

**Physical**
Multiflora rose tolerates a wide range of conditions, thus physical controls are generally not practiced.

**Mechanical**
Roses are generally shallow rooted and can be mechanically uprooted. Precaution should be taken to avoid prickles during handling and mechanized equipment may be safer when working with large plants.

**Chemical**
There are several chemical control options for multiflora rose (Table 1). Most are low-volume foliar applications, but basal spray, soil, or cut stem applications options are also available. Herbicide treatments should be applied during favorable conditions for plant growth. For best results, roses should not be treated within 12 months of mowing or burning. Foliar treatments should be applied after leaves have fully expanded, but before new growth has completely hardened.

**References**

**More Information**
The Genus Rosa belongs to the Rose (Rosaceae) Family. A few rose species are native to the Mid-South, but some are introduced. Native rose species, like *Rosa carolina* L., have pink flowers, but most non-native roses have white. Four of the more common escaped roses include Cherokee rose (*Rosa laevigata* Michx.), Macartney Rose (*Rosa bracteata* Wendland), memorial rose (*Rosa wichuraiana* Crepin), and multiflora rose. In flower or fruit, these roses are not difficult to distinguish. Cherokee and Macartney roses have solitary (not clustered) white flowers solitary with five petals. Memorial and multiflora roses are both in clusters (Fig. 1), but the memorial rose is pinkish and typically double petaled (many petals) while the typical multiflora rose is white and single petaled (Fig. 1). Some cultivated multiflora rose variants are similar to the memorial rose in flower. *Rosa multiflora* var. *cathayensis* Reyd. & Wils. is pink and cultivar ‘Platyphylla’ is double pink. But they can be distinguished by form since multiflora rose is an upright, arching shrub and the memorial rose is trailing. *Rosa multiflora* ‘Inermis’ is thornless. These variants of multiflora rose are uncommon. Forma watsoniana [*Rosa multiflora* Thunb. ex Murr. f. watsoniana (Crep.) Matsum] probably does not occur in the southeastern U.S.

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