

Multiflora Rose

Rosa multiflora Thunb. ex Murr.

- deciduous shrub**, with **vigorous** climbing/scrambling **stems**; up to 10' tall
- backward-bending **prickles** on stems
- clusters of white flowers** have a **spicy, rose fragrance**
- leaves alternate** and **compound** with **5-11** sharply-toothed **leaflets**
- the **fringed stipules** (described below) are a key characteristic



Roses typically have a pair of **highly modified leaves (stipules)** that are attached for most of their length **at the base of each leaf stalk** making the stalk look wide where the compound leaf joins the stem. In Multiflora Rose, the stipules **have tiny glands and a conspicuous fringe of hairs on the edges** (hairs easily seen without a hand lens). The tiny glands are on the backs and edges of the stipules and on the sides of the hairs. The glands (some of which are on the ends of very tiny stalks) look like little red, brown, or black dots (use hand lens).

The name “Multiflora” means **many flowers**. The pyramid-shaped flower clusters are located at the end of stems and bloom in early summer. Each flower is 3/4" – 1 1/2" across **with 5 white (sometimes pale, pinkish-white) petals**. **Fruits are bright red**, 1/4" wide, and soft when first produced in late summer. They become leathery, and persist after the leaves are shed.

Multiflora Rose was widely planted as a “living fence” and wildlife food plant. Its ability to spread by arching stems that root at their tips allows it to replace native vegetation with dense, bushy thickets. It is found in pastures, roadsides, stream banks (but not in standing water), forest edges, and may become established in open woods. Birds and mammals disperse the seeds.



Text and photos by: Charlotte Pyle, October 2002