

Multiflora Rose— Friend or Foe?

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A controversial species, multiflora rose is widespread throughout Missouri. Referred to as a "living fence," uniform stands serve as a formidable barrier against trespassers and for keeping livestock enclosed.

A native of Japan, multiflora rose was introduced originally in New England, from where it spread west and south to include such states as Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Now well adapted, its deep-rooted perennial rootstocks make it highly resistant to drought. Insects and plant diseases appear to have no detrimental effects on its growth and spread to new areas.

Characteristics

When fully developed, multiflora rose forms large, dense clumps of thorny, arching canes from five to ten feet or more tall. During late spring or early summer the small, showy white-to-pink flowers bloom in profusion and literally cover the drooping canes.

Flowering is followed by fruit set. The ripening red fruits in a background of lush, green foliage provide a delight to the nature lover, as well as food for wildlife. Multiflora rose provides food for the prairie chicken and ruffed grouse, and the persistent fruits are readily available during winter snows. Rose fruits also make up a small part of quail, pheasant and wild turkey diets, while rabbits feed on young cane growth. Deer browse the twigs and fruits throughout the year. The dense thicket of thorny canes and branches provides excellent cover for songbirds and other wildlife.

For the above reasons, conservationists for several years have promoted the propagation and planting of this species, unaware that serious problems would evolve from widespread distribution of the so-called "living fence."

Multiflora rose fences are common



Multiflora rose in bloom.

throughout Missouri. Being a persistent perennial, once established the fence is "there to stay." However, the problem is not the fence itself but the tendency for new plants to become rooted and established on all sides of the original stand.

Birds, deer and other wildlife that feed on the mature fruits are largely responsible for seed dissemination. Seed can be regurgitated by birds, or it can pass through the digestive tracts of other wildlife and thus be returned to the soil in locations well removed from the original site. It is not uncommon for native pas-

tures to be completely overgrown by volunteer plants within a few years after the original establishment.

Due to the unusually sharp and innumerable thorns, cattle will not graze among its canes. So the new plant grows uninhibited and rapidly crowds out desirable forage species—eventually reducing the carrying capacity of the pasture to the point where something must be done. The rapid spread of multiflora rose to areas where it is not wanted is the major problem with this controversial species.

A living fence—
cover for wildlife.



Multiflora rose
spreading in
native pasture.



Control

Mechanical. Newly established stands of multiflora rose can be controlled by repeated cutting with a brush hog or some other type of mechanical device. However, well established, mature stands such as a "fence" generally are more than a brush hog can handle effectively. In such situations a bulldozer is required to get the job done.

In either situation the application of a herbicide to severed canes or exposed root stocks might be required for a satisfactory kill. Also, isolated plants in sites inaccessible to ground equipment cannot be controlled by mechanical methods.

Chemical.

2,4,5-T (various brand names). Applied in early summer when leaves have reached maximum size and active growth is in progress, 2,4,5-T will do only a fair job in controlling multiflora rose. Repeat applications will also be necessary. Label regulations prohibit the use of 2,4,5-T in areas adjacent to streams, canals, ponds or other bodies of water, nor can it be used in or around farmsteads. The drift hazard to sensitive crops and plants in adjacent areas requires that 2,4,5-T be applied with care.

2,4,5-TP (Silvex). This herbicide is similar to 2,4,5-T in application and performance. Follow label instructions.

Picloram (TORDON®). Picloram is now registered for use on permanent grass pastures and rangeland in Missouri. Available as a 10 per cent granule (TORDON 10K Pellets), picloram is highly effective in controlling multiflora rose. Picloram usually will not hurt the grasses when used at the recommended rates. Any injury to established grasses usually is followed by increased growth and development due to release from brush competition.

Picloram can be applied any time the soil is not frozen. However, best results are obtained from application in the springtime before growth begins, or during periods of vigorous growth when sub-

sequent rainfall can be expected. Rain is needed to activate the pellets. Application should be made to individual plants, or to clumps and larger infestations where grasses are already suppressed through competition by multiflora rose or other brush and noxious weed species.

Distribute the pellets uniformly over the problem area. The 10 per cent pellets should be applied at 1 lb./1,000 sq. ft. or 1½ oz./100 sq. ft. This is the equivalent of 40 lbs. of formulation per acre for the control of multiflora rose and juniper.

Picloram will control other trees and brush species. Larger trees can be harmed if picloram is applied to multiflora rose growing adjacent to desirable trees. Picloram is water soluble. Do not apply where surface water from treated areas can run off to cropland or to streams, ponds or wells. Read the complete label. Apply this product only as specified on the label, observing all use directions and precautions.

Glyphosate (Roundup). Although this relatively new herbicide is not registered presently for use on multiflora rose, it has performed quite effectively under experimental conditions. A water soluble liquid, Roundup is applied as a foliage spray. It moves through the target plant from the point of foliar contact into the root system. Coverage should be uniform and complete. It has little or no soil activity.

Do not allow Roundup to contact desirable plants. Do not apply immediately before a rain. Observe label instructions. It is not presently labelled for this use, but registration of Roundup for control of multiflora rose is pending.



Multiflora rose treated with Tordon 10K.

Using Herbicides

Herbicides are safe when stored, handled, mixed and used in accordance with label instructions and sound agricultural practices. Most herbicides are low in toxicity. However, some are poisonous to man and many domestic animals and to fish and wildlife.

Most herbicides are toxic to many crop plants and ornamentals. Many are volatile, and their vapors and spray drift will cause damage to desirable plants. Avoid spraying on windy days.

Keep herbicides away from children, livestock and pets. Store them in closed, well labeled containers in a dry place where they cannot contaminate food, feed or water.

When handling herbicides wear, clean dry clothing. Launder clothing after each spraying and before wearing again.

Do not inhale herbicides, and avoid contact with spray mist and drift. Avoid repeated or prolonged contact of herbicides with your skin. Avoid spilling the chemical on your body. Wash it off with soap and water if you do and remove contaminated clothing.

To protect fish, wildlife and livestock, do not clean spraying equipment or dump excess spray material near lakes, streams or ponds.

Empty herbicide containers may be hazardous. Dispose of them in accordance with label instructions and the recommendations of your state extension weed science specialist or other local agricultural authorities. Do not burn herbicide containers.

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