

DAME'S ROCKET

Hesperis matronalis

Status in Maine: widespread



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Description: Short-lived, perennial herb 2-4' tall, commonly to 3', in the mustard family. **Leaves:** In the first year and in the spring of later years, plants form basal rosette leaves which are oval-elliptical, tapered at both ends, toothed, and up to 6" long. Stem leaves are alternate, toothed, lance-shaped, 2-6" long, and mostly lack petioles. All leaves are hairy. **Flowers:** 4-petaled, $\frac{3}{4}$ -1" wide, in shades of white to purple to pink, with a tubular base. Branching clusters of flowers are high on the plant and bloom over several weeks. **Fruit/seeds:** Long, thin pods form after flowering (2-5" long, $<\frac{1}{4}$ " wide). Pods split open when dry in late summer and fall, releasing many tiny, dark brown seeds. **Stem:** Covered in fine hairs.

Native range: Europe. **How arrived in U.S.:** Introduced to North America as an ornamental. Spread widely in wildflower seed mixes.

Reproduction: By seed. Seeds are reported to remain viable in the soil for years.

Habitat: Disturbed sites, roadsides, forest edges, wet meadows, and riparian areas. Moderately shade tolerant.

Similar native species: Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) has a taller, more spike-like inflorescence, and leaves of fireweed are only minutely toothed or entire.

Similar non-native species: Garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) is similar at first glance when in flower, but phlox



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species always have 5 flower petals and opposite leaves. Common soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*) is another potential lookalike with 5 flower petals and opposite leaves. Hairy willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) has pink flowers with 4 notched petals, opposite leaves, and its fruit pods split to reveal long white hairs on its seeds.

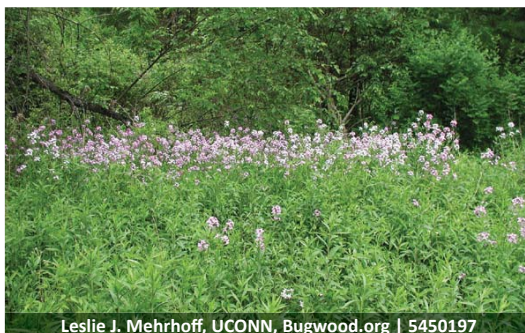
Control methods: Small numbers of plants can be hand pulled or dug up, when soil is moist, preferably before they start to produce seeds. Monitor and repeat for several years until tap roots are exhausted. Dispose in trash if flowers or seeds are present, or burn. Larger infestations can be treated with a foliar application of a triclopyr herbicide in spring/early summer (before flowering) or a glyphosate herbicide in late summer/early fall. Avoid foliar herbicide application during flowering as beneficial insects could be visiting. ***Special rules apply to herbicide use in or near wetlands and waterbodies - see the section in the back of this guide titled "Use of Herbicides to Control Invasive Plants in or Near Wetlands and Waterbodies."***



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