



Dame's Rocket

Hesperis matronalis

Habit: Showy, biennial or short-lived perennial; ranging between 0.6-1.0 m (2-3 ft) in height; first year plants over-winter as an evergreen basal rosette.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, lanceolate or ovate-lanceolate, toothed margins; downy, with simple hairs above, branched hairs below; leaves become smaller as they ascend the stem.

Stems: Upright, branched, with rough spreading hairs.

Flowers: White, pink, or purple; four-petaled; borne in terminal clusters; bloom from mid-May through July; fragrant, clove-like aroma in evening.

Fruits/seeds: Seeds are rounded, dark reddish-brown; held in long, erect pods or siliques, up to 12 cm (4.75 in) in length; ripen from June through August.

Habitat: Prefers moist, well-drained loams; tolerates light shade but prefers full sun; tolerates high alkalinity; establishes along roadsides, woodlands, wetlands, old fields and open areas.

Reproduction: By abundant seed production; a single plant produces up to 20,000 seeds.

Similar species: Native phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) has five petals, rather than four.

Comments: Native to Europe. Introduced in wildflower mixes; in some areas, has been present at low levels for many years but is now spreading aggressively on many sites.

Monitoring & rapid response: Monitor roadsides and paths. Dame's rocket is easiest to identify while in bloom during June and July. Hand-pull plants while the soil is moist. Flower and seed heads must be burned or placed in a landfill to prevent seed development. Foliar herbicide treatment is effective in early spring or late fall while native species are dormant. Control efforts should continue for several years until the seed bank is exhausted.



Photo: Steven J. Baskauf, Bioimages



Photo: Steven J. Baskauf



Photo: Tom Heutte, USDA FS



Photo: Elizabeth Czarapata



Photo: E. Czarapata



Photo: Steven J. Baskauf



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