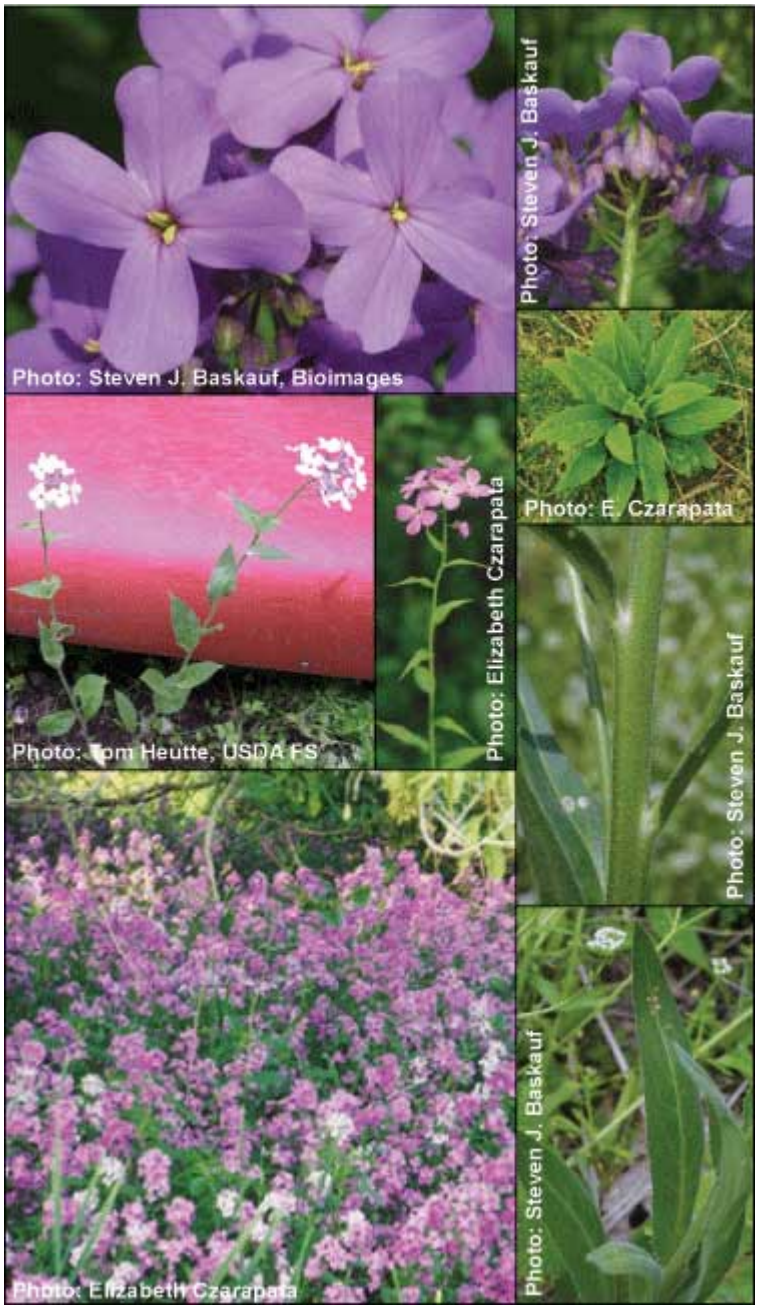
MISIN Midwest Invasive Species Information Network

Dame's rocket

Hesperis matronalis



Description

Introduced in wildflower mixes; in some areas, has been present at low levels for many years but is now spreading aggressively like its mustard family relative, garlic mustard, on many sites.

Habit

Showy, biennial or short-lived perennial; ranging between 0.6-1.0 m (2-3 ft) tall; 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; rough spreading hairs.

Flowers

White in color, pink, or purple in color; 4 petals, borne in terminal clusters; fragrant, clove-like

Source: MISIN. 2024. Midwest Invasive Species Information Network. Michigan State University - Applied Spatial Ecology and Technical Services Laboratory. Available online at https://www.misin.msu.edu/facts/detail.php?id=21.

aroma in evening; blooms mid-May through July.

Fruits and 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

Native to Europe. 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

Native phlox (Phlox divaricata) has five petals, rather than four.

Monitoring and 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/seed heads must 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.

Credits

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) has partnered with MISIN to provide the information in this fact sheet. Species images and/or information were used with permission from "A Field Identification Guide to Invasive Plants in Michigan's Natural Communities" and "A Field Guide to Invasive Plants of Aquatic and Wetland Habitats for Michigan.