



BWSR Featured Plant

Name: Smooth Wild Rose (*Rosa blanda*)

Plant Family: Rose (Rosacea)



*Bees and other pollinators use smooth wild rose as a food source
photo by Sam Shaw*

One of several wild rose species found in Minnesota, Smooth Wild Rose is valued for its beauty and ecological benefits. The species has pink flowers that are similar to other wild roses but it is distinguished by its smooth stems. The flowers provide a food source for pollinators and its nutrient rich rose hips and petals can be used to make jellies and jams. The species is found throughout much of the United States and Canada.

Statewide Wetland Indicator Status:

- FACU



*The branches of the Smooth Wild Rose, especially the newer growth are almost free of thorns and prickles.
Photo by Sam Shaw*

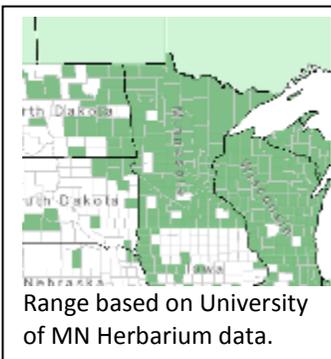
Identification

Rosa blanda can be recognized by its striking flowers, which are between two and three inches wide and have five pale to deep pink petals. The flower stalks and young branches are typically smooth and green in color. Lower, older stems tend to darken to a maroon or purplish color and develop a covering of stiff and spiky prickles. Smooth Wild Rose has alternate leaves with about seven leaflets that are 1-1.5 inches long and slightly less than an inch wide. In late summer, the flowers develop into rose hips (small spherical fruits about .5 inches wide) which eventually turn red.



*Smooth Wild Rose stems typically have between 5-9 leaflets.
Photo by Sam Shaw*

Range



Range based on University of MN Herbarium data.

Smooth Wild Rose is native to Minnesota and is widely distributed across the state. The species is found as far west as Montana and as far south as Missouri. It is also found across most of Canada. It typically grows in dry prairies and meadows where there is full sun and dry and rocky soils though it can grow in a variety of soil types.

Uses

Primary Uses:

- Shoreline Stabilization
- Wildlife Habitat
- Aesthetics

Rose petals can be used to make rosewater, which can serve as a perfume, or essential oil, which is used as a relaxant. Rose petals and rose hips are sometimes used to make teas and jellies. Rose hips are high in vitamin C and antioxidants. *Rosa blanda* and other wild roses also attract large numbers of native bees and bumblebees and provide nesting habitat for these species. Smooth Wild Rose can also provide effective soil stabilization along waterways as it forms an extensive root system. It can be used in stormwater plantings but can spread underground and may not be suited to small raingardens where it can outcompete other vegetation.



Smooth Wild Rose in a stormwater planting
Photo by Sam Shaw

Planting Recommendations

Planting Methods

- Seeds
- Softwood Cuttings
- Containerized Plants
- Transplanting

Seeds can be removed from red, ripe rose hips and planted shortly after collection, or cold-moist stratification can be used over winter to plant seeds into containers in the spring. New plants can also be propagated from softwood cuttings or by separating and transplanting root masses in early spring or late fall. Wild roses like *Rosa blanda* prefer full sun and well-drained soil but require little support once properly established. They do not even require mulching in the winter like cultivated roses.

Similar Species



From left to right: Similar species include the Prairie Rose (*Rosa arkansana*), Prickly Wild Rose (*Rosa acicularis*, photo by Peter M. Dziuk), and Wood's Wild Rose (*Rosa woodsii*, picture by Katy Chayka). Prairie Rose and Prickly Wild Rose have prickles on newer stems that differentiate them from Smooth Wild Rose. Wood's Wild Rose is very similar to Smooth Wild Rose but can have a pair of prickles where leaves attach to the stem.

Minnesota Wildflowers: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/shrub/smooth-wild-rose>

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden: <http://www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org/pages/plants/smoothrose.html>

Canadian Wildlife Foundation: <http://cwf-fcf.org/en/discover-wildlife/flora-fauna/flora/wild-roses.html#species?referrer=http://cwf-fcf.org/en/discover-wildlife/flora-fauna/flora/wild-roses.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>