

August 2016 Plant of the Month



Rosa palustris Marsh, Swamp Rose

Plant of the Month for August is a native pink flowering shrub found throughout New Jersey. *Rosa palustris*, or swamp rose, is found State-wide, in lowlands, swamps, marshes and other freshwater wetlands. Swamp rose is aptly named. The plant is almost found exclusively in wetlands, specifically in those freshwater wetlands with an open canopy or in a marsh setting. It is a common shrub component in freshwater tidal high marshes. Roadside ditches, lake edges and shrub dominated wetlands are common habitats to see this plant.

Swamp rose is a member of the typical genus *Rosa*, the namesake of the Rose Family, Roseaceae. The genus *Rosa* is well represented in New Jersey. Mary Hough (1983) listed 12 species found in the State, of which only 4 are native (*Rosa blanda*, *R. carolina*, *R. palustris*, *R. virginiana*). Our species differs from *Rosa blanda* and *Rosa carolina* by habitat: they prefer dry or drought prone soils. It differs from its closest relative, *Rosa virginiana*, by having finer toothed leaves and slightly larger thorns. I find the field identification between the two species difficult, and usually see *R. virginiana* in slightly less wet conditions, with a slightly shorter, branched stature. The five petal pink flowers should be finished by late July and early August. Once fertilized, the ovary will mature into a swollen hypanthium or "rose hip" with a brilliant red color, covered by stipitate glands.

Eastern Native Americans, specifically by the Cherokee and Iroquois, used this species as a wormer (roots and bark are used as an infusion), and for dysentery as a decoction. Swamp rose is rarely used in our landscapes, with the exception of wetland creation plantings. Be sure to watch the edges of open wetlands for this beautiful native shrub before the first hints of autumn arrive.