



# Dames' Rocket

*Hesperis matronalis* (Aka Dames violet, sweet rocket)

Provincial Designation:  
Noxious



Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

## Overview:

Dame's rocket is a biennial or short-lived perennial native to Europe & SW Asia. A member of the Mustard family, it is a prolific seed producer. The flowers are very fragrant - especially in the evening - and are insect pollinated. Introduced as an ornamental, it has spread throughout North America, except for the driest areas.

Dame's rocket produces a rosette in the first year of growth and then a flowering bolt in the second year. It blooms early summer; stems wither and die by late summer.

It is very similar to Garden phlox, which has 5 petals and opposite leaves, but Dame's rocket has 4 petals & alternate leaves.

## Habitat:

Requires moderately moist soils and does best in the moist, humus rich soils of wooded areas. It is tolerant of partial shade, such as forest edges.

## Identification:

**Stems:** Are erect, several per plant, and grow 0.5 to 1m tall, occasionally taller. The upper stems are often branched.

**Leaves:** Are alternate, lance shaped, and 1-4 cm wide and 4-15 cm long. They are dark green, hairy on both sides, and have serrated edges. Lower leaves have short petioles (stems). Basal leaves wither by flowering.

**Flowers:** Can be white, lavender-pink or purple and are 8-12 mm wide with four petals. Flowers are borne in loose clusters at tops of stems. Seed pods are long 0.5 to 1.5 cm long, constricted between seeds<sup>1</sup> and become papery as they mature. Seeds are black and 1-1.5 cm long.

## Prevention:

Dame's rocket is often a contaminant of wildflower seed mixes - do not purchase seed mixes which do not list the Latin names of the contents. It requires disturbance to become established, but then can out compete native vegetation. Plants will re-bloom if deadheaded.

## Control:

**Grazing:** Not known. Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.

**Cultivation:** Not a suitable control method.

**Mechanical:** Hand pulling is considered the most effective as the roots come out easily from moist soils, or can easily be dug out with a knife. Plant density may increase the year following control work due to disturbance, but repeated removal will exhaust the seed bank. Burning can also be effective.

**Chemical:** Currently no selective herbicides are registered for use on Dame's rocket. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Always read and follow label directions. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

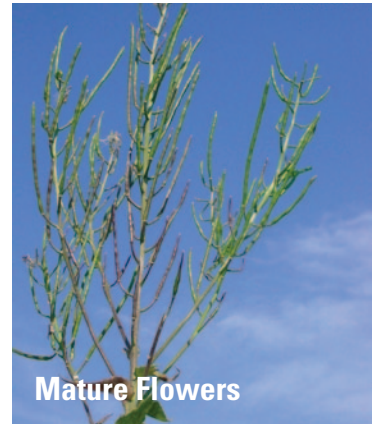
**Biological:** None researched to date.

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# Dames' Rocket (Continued)



*M. Frey, The Presidio Trust United States*



*Richard Old, XID Services inc.*

## REFERENCES

1 Flora of China. *Hesperis matronalis* [www.Floras.org](http://www.Floras.org)