

## **DAME'S ROCKET, Another Spring Woodland Invasive to Control**

Dame's rocket, *Hesperis matronalis*, is a tall (1-3' in height when blooming), herbaceous biennial or perennial in the MUSTARD family, and not a phlox. It has become prolific in the understory of woodlands, especially in moist areas along streams. Many people confuse it as a native phlox as it hosts beautiful pink and white flowers. Garden phlox, *Phlox paniculata*, another non-native plant, may also be confused with Dame's rocket. The leaves of Dame's rocket are oblong, sharply toothed, and alternately arranged on the stem. The flowers may be pink or white in large, fragrant clusters with 4 petals that bloom during May-June. The seeds are produced in long, narrow fruits, typical of a mustard and similar to garlic mustard. They produce hundreds of seeds which are "rocketed" out when the seed capsule splits. In contrast, phlox have opposite leaves that are not toothed and 5 petals on the flowers. Dame's rocket may sometimes be included in native wildflower mixes and will become invasive quickly in planted situations. Other common names include mother-of-the-evening and sweet rocket.

Control of Dame's rocket is similar to garlic mustard since it typically behaves as a biennial. First year rosettes may be pulled, dug out, or sprayed with a systemic herbicide early or late in the season (when other herbaceous plants are dormant). When flowering, plants may be pulled or cut back, but should always be removed from the site to decay off-site so the fruits do not continue to develop. As with garlic mustard, it is best to control this species before it becomes widespread and prolific in the woods as it will eliminate other native plants.