

## Trailing Blackberry

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*Rubus hispidus* L.

Other names: Hispid blackberry, swamp dewberry, dewberry

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### Description

Trailing blackberry is a horizontally growing vine, often rooting at the nodes and tips of the shoots. The woody, crawling stem has weak bristles although these may be much reduced on older plants. The leaves are divided and have three leaflets that have toothed margins. Leaf characteristics are very variable. The stalks of the leaves may be covered in weak bristles. The leathery and shiny leaves often persist throughout the winter. The flowering shoots grow more upright, producing flowers with 5 white petals and many stamens and pistils. The flowers occur singly in the axils of leaves or in groups of three or more. The fruit is a typical blackberry, consisting of an aggregate of seed-bearing structures known as drupelets which ripen in mid-August.

**Trailing Blackberry**



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### Economic Importance

Trailing blackberry is one of several blackberries occurring in Nova Scotia that are similar in appearance. This species is difficult to control and is found in waste places, fence rows, orchards blueberry and other fruit crops. The plant tolerates a wide variety of soil conditions and readily invades disturbed sites such as lowbush blueberry fields. It is often one of the more common species seen growing along fence rows, rock piles and along the margins of fields. This species survives burning, and mowing stimulates the formation of suckers which can contribute to increased problems. Although it does not cause serious yield losses in lowbush blueberries, it can cause problems with harvesting and movement of equipment through the field.

**Blackberry Sketch**



*Rubus hispidus* L.  
Trailing Blackberry

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## Life Cycle

Trailing blackberry is a long-lived perennial that grows from a central crown or from buds along a lateral rhizome system. The vines are biennial, known as primocanes in the first year and floricanes in the second year. New shoots emerge in late May to early June and growth of the primocanes continues until late August. These shoots do not develop flowers in the first year. The tips of the first year canes may form roots if in contact with the soil, producing a terminal bud which produces a shoot the next year. The plant also roots at the points where the nodes are in contact with the soil. In the second year, buds can break in early May with leaf expansion occurring until mid-June. The floricanes flower by mid-June and continue until late July. The fruit are produced from early August until mid-September. The floricanes die at the end of this second season. Seedlings are rare in the field and growth occurs primarily from the central crown and the rhizomes.

## Control Strategy

Vegetative reproduction of the plant from the crown and the rhizome system contribute to the difficulty in controlling this weed. Mowing will induce branching of the plant by stimulating the growth of suckers from lateral buds of the primocanes and floricanes as well as from the rhizomes. The plants also survive burning and will spread by lateral growth. Trailing blackberry is susceptible to the herbicide hexazinone (Velpar /Pronone) but it can tolerate pre-emergence applications of this herbicide at currently registered rates. The most effective option is spot treatment with glyphosate (Round-up) to prevent further spread of the vines.

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