

## Prairie Wild Rose (*Rosa arkansana*)

**Appearance:** Prairie wild rose is a prickly-stemmed native shrub (usually less than 18 inches tall) common in southern and western Minnesota. Its pink, five-petaled flowers are an almost ever-present feature of native prairies here in June and early July.

**Other native roses:** Western wild rose (*R. macounii*), smooth wild rose (*R. blanda*), prickly wild rose (*R. acicularis*).

**Identification:** Minnesota's four common native roses are highly variable in character—probably because they commonly hybridize—and can be difficult to distinguish from one another. Accurate identification depends on the plant's location, habitat type, and physical characteristics, such as the pattern of stem prickles and the number of leaflets on its compound leaves. The prairie wild rose is the only one that blooms on soft, prickly new stems that grow directly from the roots, as well as from new lateral shoots on older, woody stems. This is probably an adaptation to once-frequent wildfires that burned back the above-ground parts of prairie plants.

**Habitat:** Prairie wild roses historically grew in dry to mesic (moist) upland prairies. They now also grow in sunny roadsides, railroad rights of way, field edges, pastures, and other disturbed sites.

**Dispersal:** After the flowers bloom, the hypanthium (roughly the base of the flower below the petals) develops into a spherical, bright red, leathery, seed-packed fruit, called a *hip*. The bright red fruits evolved to attract foraging animals that then pass the seeds, thus dispersing the species to new locations. Prairie wild roses also spread vegetatively by horizontal underground stems.

**Pollinators:** All of Minnesota's native rose species have a classic open-pollinated flower: a simple dish shape, with easily accessible nectar and a big brush of pollen-bearing stamens. This attracts a variety of insect pollinators—flies, bees, wasps, beetles—rather than one specialized group such as butterflies. Bumblebees particularly like wild roses, probably because they can gather pollen in abundance, making every visit to a wild rose worth the trip.

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