

# School-to-Nature



## Dame's Rocket, Wildflower

In late spring, Dame's Rocket is common along roadsides and in moist, sunny areas of Conservancy properties. A member of the Mustard family, it is a biennial or short-lived perennial, sprouting leaves and a small plant the first year, then blossoming and making seeds the second year. It was native to Eurasia, then cultivated in many areas of the world as a garden flower. However, our Conservancy and many others consider it invasive, for taking over the native habitat of other wildflowers and grasses. Conservancy volunteers remove it by pulling it up before it finishes flowering.

Dame's Rocket can grow more than 3 feet tall, and tends to grow in colonies. The long, pointed leaves feel rough to the touch because of small hairs on the surface. Each of the flowers has four petals, and colors of the flowers vary in shades of lavender, purple, pink, and white. The flowers attract all of the pollinators: bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, and hummingbirds. The flowers have a pleasant scent that grows stronger in the evening.



The plants bloom until the weather warms into summer; and then very long and skinny seed pods form that are several inches long, containing two rows of tiny seeds.



The plant and flowers are edible but fairly bitter; younger leaves and flowers can be added safely to salads. Seeds can also be sprouted to add to salads.

Dame's Rocket is sometimes confused with Garden Phlox. Dame's Rocket has alternately arranged leaves and four petals per flower, while Phlox has opposite leaves and five petals. It's kind of sad that Dame's Rocket is invasive; it's a colorful addition to springtime.

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