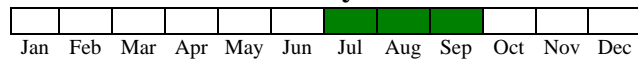




**Best Survey Period**



**Legal status:** Listed as Special Concern in Canada. No official rank in the US.

**Global and provincial rank:** G5T5/S3. Considered globally secure. The species is common, widespread and abundant except at the periphery of its range.

**Other Common names:** Ketmie des marais, rose mallow.

**Family:** Malvaceae. The mallow family.

**Total range:** Swamp rose mallow is one of the most northerly representatives of a large tropical and sub-tropical family. It is the only member of the genus *Hibiscus* that occurs naturally in the wild in Canada. *Hibiscus moscheutos* occurs throughout much of the US east of the Mississippi and north of Florida. There are

northern populations in Ontario, Michigan, New York, Wisconsin, Ohio and Illinois centered around the Great Lakes and rather disjunct from the main populations.

There are also adventive populations that appear to be spreading into the American west and in parts of Europe and Asia.

**Provincial distribution:** In Ontario *H. moscheutos* is restricted to the south and mostly confined to wetland and coastal marshes along the shores of Lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario, with a few inland stations. It is most abundant at the west end of Lake Erie. It has been recorded from Lambton, Essex, Kent, Elgin and Norfolk counties southwestern Ontario and from Frontenac and Prince Edward County in eastern Lake Ontario

**Recognition:** Swamp Rose Mallow is a large perennial that grows up to 2 m tall. Dense colonies may form of stems that grow from a single root stock. The stems are greyish above because they are covered with dense star-shaped hairs.

The leaves are oblong to egg-shaped, coarsely toothed, often with shallow lobes above the middle, like maple leaves. They are covered with dense star-shaped hairs beneath.

The flowers grow in the axils of upper leaves and are large, 10-20 cm wide, and pink or occasionally white, radially symmetrical and bowl-shaped with five petals. In the centre of the flower is a column of stamens. A style tipped by a stigma with five round lobes protrudes beyond it. The fruit is a globose capsule.

**Habitat:** In Ontario Swamp Rose Mallow typically grows in early successional coastal wetlands along the Great Lakes shorelines. It is found in shallow water of cattail marshes, where it grows at the edge of the cattail stands, and in meadow marshes. The commonest species in the former habitat is hybrid cattail *Typha x glauca*. The latter habitats are often dominated by the introduced and invasive *Phragmites australis*. *H. moscheutos* can also be found in wet woods and along ditches and dykes where it is associated with earth movement. Soils are usually organic or clay

**Biology:** Vegetative spread is probably important to Swamp Rose Mallow. Clumps get bigger and produce more stems each year, but do not spread beyond a few meters. However, sometimes clumps break apart during storms and bits may drift long distances thus providing a means of dispersal.

Although the open, showy flowers and the arrangement of reproductive parts, with stigmas separated from the anthers, favour out-crossing, *H. moscheutos* is self compatible and produces

seeds in the absence of another individuals. The pollen is sticky and tends to clump and so does not disperse by wind. Flowers are insect-pollinated, usually by large bees. Although moths, butterflies, small bees and flowers may visit the flowers they may not be effective pollinators.

Most flowers open in the morning and last a single day, however if flowers do not get pollinated they can stay open for several more days.

Seeds ripen in late fall and seed set is quite high although some seeds are predated by beetle larvae. The seeds can float for long periods, providing an effective means of dispersal. Seeds probably germinate when they are stranded on muddy shorelines or exposed by falling water levels.

Seeds are known to be eaten by Northern Bobwhite quail and various species of duck. However the seed coat is hard and resistant and probably passes intact through the gut of most birds.

**Conservation/management:** Fluctuations in water level are important for maintaining marsh habitat. *Hibiscus moscheutos* does well in periods of low water and in managed wetlands where draw-downs are frequent. Plants seem to prefer protected marshes to open coastlines.

Disturbances such as floods, storm damage, ice scour, beaver activity, drainage, dyking and fire probably help maintain habitat by reducing competition.

Populations of *H. moscheutos* in Ontario are probably not under immediate threat. There are several populations, some consisting of thousands of plants, although most of these are in managed wetlands. Invasive spread of *Phragmites* and *Typha x glauca* is a concern and may be detrimental to long term survival of the species.

**Comments:** *Hibiscus moscheutos* was introduced into cultivation as an ornamental in the early 1800s. Plants can be grown easily from seed and can flower in the first season. They transplant easily, even when in full flower.

An infusion of dried stalks of *H. moscheutos* can be applied for inflammation of the bladder.

**Research needs:** Populations on Walpole island have not been mapped, censused or monitored recently. The spread of invasive species into Swamp Rose Mallow populations is unknown, but poses a possible threat..

**Related abstracts:** American Lotus.

**Selected references:**

Allen, G.M. and B. A. Ford. 2003. Update COSEWIC Status Report on Swamp Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*). Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. 56 pp.

Spira, T.P. 1989. Reproductive biology of *Hibiscus moscheutos* (Malvaceae). In J. Brock and Y. Linhart (eds.), The evolutionary ecology of plants. Pp 247-255. Westview Press, Boulder, CO.

**Abstract citation:**

Bowles, J.M. 2004. Special plant abstract for *Hibiscus moscheutos* (Swamp Rose Mallow)... Walpole Island First Nation, ON and Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Lansing, MI. 3 pp.