

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE INFO SHEET

Native to Europe and Asia, Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) was introduced to North America in the 1800s for ornamental and medicinal purposes. It is a common invader of both natural and disturbed wetlands, and can grow in a variety of soil types and natural communities. Purple Loosestrife reproduces by seed and plant fragment, making control difficult.



You CAN Remove Loosestrife from Your Land

STEP 1. IDENTIFY



Tall, multi-stemmed perennial that averages five feet in height, but can reach up to ten feet. Dark green opposite or whorled leaves (several leaves emanating from the same spot) are directly connected to the stalk and are heart-shaped at the base and spear-shaped at the tip. Purple flowers bloom July through October and are clustered on a four to sixteen-inch tall spike. Individual flowers have five to seven petals.

Note: Purple Loosestrife can be confused with two similarly shaped native plants with purple flowers—Winged Loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum*) is smaller in size (average height of two feet) and generally exhibits alternate leaves at the top of the stalk, while Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) has alternate leaves and flowers with four petals.



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STEP 2. REMOVE

Purple Loosestrife can quickly form dense stands that displace native vegetation. The plants produce over two million high-viability seeds per year, allowing for this particularly aggressive invader to spread rapidly. Purple Loosestrife flourishes in both natural and disturbed wetlands, altering their ecological structure and function. The plants support fewer insects than native aquatic vegetation, providing less food for insect-eating birds.

Control: Remove smaller plants by hand pulling, taking care to include the entire root system. A small pitchfork can be helpful in prying medium-sized plants out of the ground. For plants that are too large to pull, cut at the base and remove the flowering stalks before they go to seed.

Bag the pulled plants and plant parts and deliver to a commercial composting site that accepts invasive plants. Call your local composting facility to inquire. In Northern Vermont, Green Mountain Compost in Williston accepts some invasive plants (as of June 2019). You may also dry and burn the plants if open burning is permitted in your town.



STEP 3. MONITOR

Be vigilant. Inspect the infestation site each year to deal with any re-growth or missed Loosestrife plants.

For more information:

Please give us a call at 802-862-4150 or visit www.lclt.org/



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