

Invasive Species Highlight

Purple Loosestrife

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a perennial plant found in a range of wet soil habitats, growing in water or near the water line. Originally from Europe and Asia, the species was unintentionally introduced to the Great Lakes through contaminated cargo ship ballast waters as well as through the deliberate importation of seeds to be sold as a decorative ornamental plant. Purple loosestrife is a prohibited invasive species, making it unlawful to possess, import, purchase, transport or introduce this species except under a permit.

Environmental Impact

Purple loosestrife forms dense growth along shorelines, making water access difficult. It outcompetes native plants, reduces habitat diversity, and provides poor shelter and food for wildlife. Its dense root systems can also disrupt the natural hydrology of wetlands.



Identification

- A herbaceous plant with a bushy appearance that can grow 3'-7' tall and have multiple stems growing from a single rootstock.
- The stem is stiff, can have up to six sides and often branch.
- Leaves are opposite or whorled, lance-shaped with smooth edges, stalkless and can be downy.
- Flowers are purple/pink colored and bloom in tall spikes for most of the summer months. Flowers bloom in multiple rings at once from the bottom of the spike to the top and typically have 6 petals.
- Up to 300,000 tiny seeds are produced per stem each year and are viable for up to 20 years.
- Roots have a large and woody taproot that rapidly extends into fibrous rhizomes.



Look-alikes

Native look-alikes include Fireweed and Blue Vervain.

Clean all invasive species from boats, trailers, and other equipment.
Drain water from boats, ballast tanks, motors, and live wells before leaving.
Dry boats and equipment to ensure young mussels are not transported.

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For any questions, call Abbi Hoffman - 507-523-2171 x113

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References and Resources

- “(Lythrum salicaria) Purple loosestrife” *Minnesota Wildflowers*. <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/purple-loosestrife>
- “Purple loosestrife” Gupta, et al. *University of Minnesota*. <https://extension.umn.edu/identify-invasive-species/purple-loosestrife>
- “Purple Loosestrife” *Minnesota Department of Agriculture*. <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/weedcontrol/noxiouslist/purpleloosestrife>
- “Purple Loosestrife” in The 10 Plants That Changed Minnesota. *University of Minnesota*. <https://top10plantsmn.umn.edu/10-plants/purple-loosestrife>
- “Purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria)” *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquaticplants/purpleloosestrife/index.html>