

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

(Lythrum salicaria)



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? A perennial that can grow 5 to 8 feet tall. Stems are usually 4 sided with many branches and narrow leaves. Showy spikes of purple-pink flowers bloom from mid to late summer. Plants are long lived and mature plants may produce more than 2.5 million seeds per year.

WHERE DOES IT GROW? A native of Europe, loosestrife came to the U.S. in the early 1800's most likely as seed contained in soil used as ships ballast and as a medicinal herb. Today it is often sold in seed and plant catalogs as an ornamental. Loosestrife prefers to grow in moist soils in marshes, stream banks, ditches and along shorelines.

WHEN DOES IT BLOOM? Flowering begins in late July and continues into September.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD? This weed is spread to new sites by seed which is carried by the movement of water, on people's boots and by ducks, geese and other water animals. Also, new plants will come from its large, thick underground root system and from broken stem pieces of the plant which have the ability to develop roots and start new plants.

HOW DO I CONTROL IT? If left to grow wild, loosestrife will clog the wetland or waterway leaving no room for native plants, fish or water birds and animals. Once a colony of loosestrife becomes established, it is very difficult to control.

NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL: All methods can be done before the plants flower and set seed.

- Do not buy purple loosestrife seeds or plants. Check wildflower seed packages to make sure they do not contain loosestrife. Never order or buy loosestrife plants from any nursery. Contact your local Noxious Weed Office if you find this plant being sold locally. Idaho's noxious weed law prohibits the purchase and planting of noxious weeds in Idaho.
- For small groups of plants, hand pulling can be done. The root system must be completely removed or a new plant will begin.
- Mowing or cutting the plant will decrease the plants energy, but is not recommended unless all cut pieces can be bagged to prevent any new plants from developing from the cut pieces.
- Biological control is seen as the most likely method of long term control. In Idaho, the releases of bio-control insects (including 2 beetles, *Galerucella californiensis* and *Galerucella pusilla*) have worked. The adult beetles feed on the leaves of the plant while the larvae feed first on the leaf buds, then as they mature; they begin to feed on leaves and stems.



CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- The use of herbicides near water or in wetlands requires chemicals that are labeled for aquatic treatment. See the reverse side for additional information on control options, and see our Chemical Treatment handout for more information on using herbicides. For more information contact:

Kootenai County Noxious Weed Control
10905 N. Ramsey Road, Hayden, ID 83835
208-446-1290

kcnoxioussweeds@kcgov.us or www.kcweeds.com

Kootenai County does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment in, its public meetings, programs, or activities. Requests for assistance or accommodations can be arranged by contacting the Noxious Weed Control Department at (208) 446-1290 or County Administration Office TTY (208)446-2145 with 3 days advance notice.

How to Control Purple Loosestrife

Purple Loosestrife is a perennial that reproduces not only by seed but also vegetatively through roots and stem fragments.

Mechanical Pulling/digging can be effective on very small/early infestations, but mechanical mowing or tillage isn't usually possible on the wetland sites where Purple Loosestrife grows. Also be aware root and stem fragments can regrow.

Cultural The best long term weed control is to get your desirable native plants thriving. Killing weeds is only one step, you have to also replace them with something good. Seed and fertilize so your grass can take nutrients away from the weeds and not leave available open soil for new weeds to germinate.

Biological Several beetles and weevils are available for biological control of Purple Loosestrife. Contact Nez Perce Biocontrol Center for more information; (208)843-9374 or nezpercebiocontrol.com.

Chemical **Check the label before applying herbicides near water. See our Chemical Treatment handout for more information on using herbicides.*

- **Triclopyr** is the active ingredient in herbicide products such as **Garlon**, **Element**, and many "Poison Ivy and Tough Brush Killer" type products. It is broadleaf selective (safe on grass) and can be effective on Purple Loosestrife if applied during the bud to mid flowering stages. Some Triclopyr products are labelled for aquatic application.
- **Metsulfuron Methyl** is the active ingredient in herbicide products such as **Escort XP**. It is safe on most perennial grasses and can be effective on Purple Loosestrife if applied during the flower bud and flowering stages.
- **Imazapyr** is the active ingredient in herbicide products such as **Habitat**, **Polaris**, etc. It is non-selective and can be effective on Purple Loosestrife if applied while the plants are rapidly growing from mid bloom until the first killing frost. Some Imazapyr products are labeled for aquatic application.

Chemical recommendations are based on University of Idaho Extension Bulletin 865 [Idaho's Noxious Weeds 2011 Control Guidelines Noncrop and Rangeland Sites](#), the book [Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States](#) published by UC Davis Weed Research & Information Center, and herbicide labels.