

Natural Area Preservation
 City of Ann Arbor
 1831 Traver Road
 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105
 Phone: 734•794•6627 Fax: 734•997•1072
 E-mail: nap@a2gov.org
 Web site: www.a2gov.org/nap



INVASIVE PLANTS

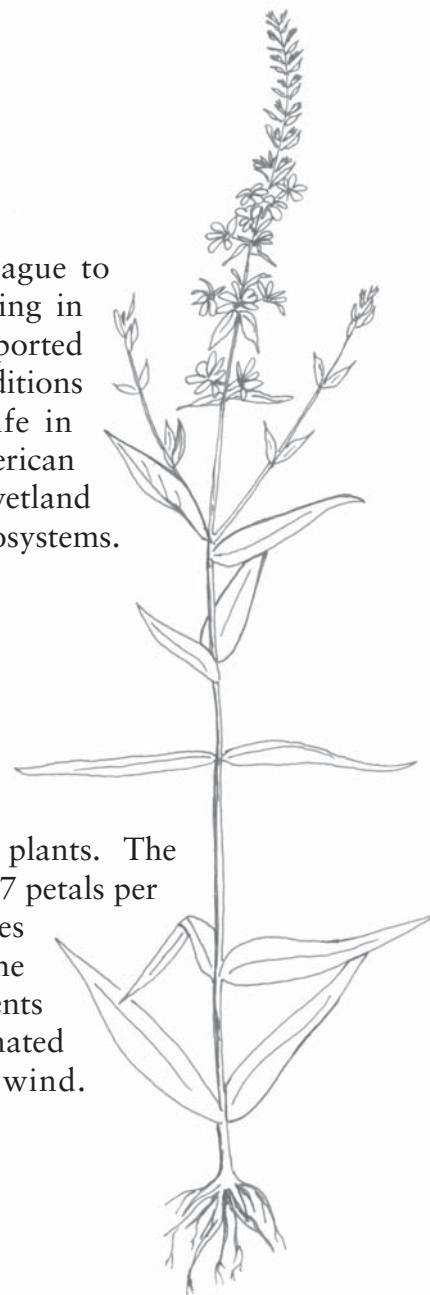
Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*

History

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) has become a plague to shorelines and wetlands across North America. Arriving in the early 1800s, this Eurasian plant was intentionally imported for garden and medicinal use. In its native habitat, conditions and biological controls help to keep purple loosestrife in check. Because these checks are not present in North American wetlands, it can take over – altering the function of vital wetland natural areas and reducing the overall health of these ecosystems.

How Can I Identify It?

Purple loosestrife is a perennial, ranging from 4 – 7 feet tall with opposite or whorled, lance-shaped leaves; although leaves can be alternate on part of the plant. The stem is stiff, four sided, and has a woody appearance in older plants. The flowers are magenta in color and grow in a spike with 5 – 7 petals per flower. Each plant can have as many as 30 flower spikes and can produce over 2.5 million dust-sized seeds. The plants also reproduce vegetatively with root or stem segments forming new flowering plants. The plant is insect pollinated and the seeds are dispersed by animals, water, and wind.



F A C T S H E E T

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE *Lythrum salicaria*

How Can Purple Loosestrife Be Controlled?

- The sale of purple loosestrife is illegal in Michigan and many other states. Preventing the spread of invasives is much easier than removing them.
- NAP's preferred method of control is by removing flower heads and applying herbicide to individual plants with a wetland-approved herbicide.
- Large infestations pose a difficult problem. Biological controls, such as the use of *Galerucella* beetles may prove to be the best control method.
- For more information on control methods visit The Nature Conservancy website at: <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu>



Purple loosestrife flower

What Can I Do?

- If there is a small infestation on your property it would be effective to pull the weed, but since purple loosestrife will re-sprout from any root fragment, it will take persistency to be rid of it. Pulled plants should be disposed of at a municipal composting facility.
- Stay on, and keep pets on, established roads and trails to prevent invasive seed dispersal.
- After visiting an area that has purple loosestrife, or other invasive weeds present, clean up before you leave the site! Make sure your clothes, shoes, vehicles, and pets are mud and/or seed free.
- Use plants native to southeastern Michigan in upcoming landscaping projects. NAP has a series of brochures to assist you in choosing native plants for your garden.
- Garden varieties of purple loosestrife, such as “morden pink” or “dropmore” are said to be sterile, but can cross-pollinate with non-sterile plants and produce viable seeds. Since loosestrife is an insect pollinated plant, this crossing is not dependent on close proximity of the two types of plant.
- Learn to identify purple loosestrife and other invasive weeds. Invasive herbaceous plants NAP would appreciate help with are:

garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

bittercress (*Cardamine impatiens*)

knapweed (*Centaurea spp.*)

Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)

lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*)

dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)

golden archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*)

common motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)