

Purple loosestrife

Lythrum salicaria L.

Loosestrife Family

Key identifying traits

- ❑ Has long, showy, rose-purple flower spikes
- ❑ Flowers are small, numerous & have 5-7 petals
- ❑ Usually associated with moist or marshy areas
- ❑ Leaves simple, entire, and opposite or whorled
- ❑ Forms substantial root wads with many stems
- ❑ Has erect stems, often growing 6 to 10 feet tall
- ❑ Stems are stiff and four-sided
- ❑ Develops root rhizomes and abundant seeds
- ❑ Both a woody tap root and fibrous root system

Biology and ecology

- An attractive rhizomatous perennial; reproduces by seed, roots and vegetative growth
- Forms up to 2.5 million, pepper-size seeds per plant; seeds float on water and stick to animals
- Commonly displaces desirable wildlife habitat
- Only bees make good use of infested habitat
- Dense infestations can impede water flow
- Infestations often arise from ornamental use
- Sometimes confused with fireweed and spiraea

Control

Prevention - Learn to identify plants; beware of ornamental varieties & contaminated boats/motors

Biological - Some very effective agents available and established in our county; substantial impact on plant vigor and reproduction (*Galerucella* & *Hylobius*)

Cultural - Competitive vegetation helps although plants can invade healthy native as well as managed introduced plant habitats

Mechanical - Small infestations can be dug, bagged and disposed of taking care not to disperse seeds

Chemical - Non-selective or broad leaf herbicides can be effectively used depending on site; if plants are in bloom, clip/bag flowers prior to spray; special care, permit and license required for aquatic applications



browning plants due to biocontrol damage



cutting flowering heads to bag prior to spray

Where found – Infestations at Waitts Lake, Loon Lake and Lake Spokane; a few other minor infestations have been located in pastures and along ditches elsewhere in Stevens County.