

Garden Loosestrife

Lysimachia vulgaris

Primrose Family

Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

Identification Tips

- Showy, bright yellow flowers grow in clusters near the top of the plant
- Softly hairy leaves and stems on erect plants growing 3 to 6 feet tall
- Leaves are lance or egg-shaped and usually 3 in a whorl (sometimes 2 or 4)
- Flowers have 5 petals that are joined at the base
- The base of the flowers is ringed by green sepals that have distinct orange-brown edges
- Seeds found in dry, egg-shaped capsules

Biology

- Upright perennial with roots forming on creeping stems that are partly or entirely underground (rhizomes)
- Rhizomes can be up to 15 feet long
- Reproduces by seed and by vegetative growth
- Somewhat slow to invade into new areas but once established, highly competitive and able to spread aggressively into stands of established vegetation
- Able to out-compete even tough plants such as cattails and purple loosestrife
- Thrives in wet sites with full sun but also shade-tolerant and able to grow in sites that dry out in the summer
- Flowers July to August

Impacts

- Damages shoreline and wetland ecosystems by replacing beneficial native plants
- Reduces habitat needed by waterfowl, wildlife, birds and fish, including several species of salmon
- Reduces recreational opportunities

Distribution

- Occurs on lakeshores, waterways and in wetlands
- Mostly found on Lake Sammamish, Lake Washington and the Sammamish River. Also Lake Burien and in the lower Snoqualmie River valley.
- Occasionally found growing as an ornamental



Garden loosestrife originated from Europe and has no natural enemies in North America.



A large infestation of garden loosestrife in Marymoor Park is choking out native vegetation.

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: **206-477-WEED**
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds

What You Can Do

Do your part by checking regularly for garden loosestrife on your property and along public waterways and wetlands. If a new infestation on public lands is spotted, please contact the King County Noxious Weed Control program.

Control Methods

Most control methods need to be applied over several years to be successful. Often, a combination of methods will be more effective than one by itself.

Prevention: Avoid varieties sold as ornamentals. If boating in areas with loosestrife, check boat hulls, motors and other equipment for plant fragments that can be transported to new waterways.

Manual: Small infestations can be dug, bagged and disposed of, taking care not to disperse seeds. Be sure to dig up as much rhizome as possible. Mature flowering stems can be cut *at base* in late summer to prevent seed production. Brush off boots and clothes before leaving the infested area.

Mechanical: Cutting or mowing by itself is not an effective control option for garden loosestrife. New shoots and roots will develop from cut plants. Black plastic covering or landscaping fabric is an interim option for dense seedling infestations. It does not kill mature plants, but it does slow growth and seed production.

Chemical: Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. **Follow all label directions and local regulations regarding herbicide use in sensitive areas.** Certain herbicides cannot be used in aquatic areas or their buffers. If herbicides are used, make sure that their label specifies your type of site. All aquatic herbicides are restricted-use herbicides. Purchase and application of these herbicides can only be done by licensed aquatic herbicide applicators. Permits are required before applying aquatic herbicides. Aquatic formulations of glyphosate or triclopyr are effective but may require repeat applications. Follow up in the second year is crucial for successful control. For site specific herbicide recommendations, please contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program.



Garden loosestrife rings lakes and wetlands, out-competing beneficial vegetation and forming a dense, underground mat of rhizomes.

Yellow loosestrife (right and below) is often confused with its more aggressive cousin, garden loosestrife.



Don't be fooled: garden loosestrife looks very similar to yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia punctata*) and grows in the same habitat. It is also somewhat invasive, but has not been elevated to the same status as garden and purple loosestrife within King County. Yellow loosestrife has yellow, star-like blooms all along the flower stem (not just at the top). Blooms begin in mid-June. It also is shorter than garden loosestrife, usually only reaching a height of 4 feet.