



# FACT SHEET

## PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

(*Lythrum salicaria*)

- Purple loosestrife can be ten feet tall at maturity.
- The multiple stems are squarish with four to six sides.
- The leaves are up to four inches long, usually lance-shaped, with smooth edges.
- The magenta-colored flowers, which bloom from July to October, appear tightly clustered on tall spikes.
- Loosestrife family.

### LOOK ALIKES:



**Fireweed**, (*Epilobium angustifolium*—native), commonly grows in drier ground than purple loosestrife, and does not have a square stem.



**Cooley's hedgenettle**, (*Stachys cooleyae*—native) seldom grows taller than four feet, and the plants are not branched or bushy. The leaves are nettle-like, with toothed edges.



**Butterfly bush**, (*Buddleja spp.*), is a garden ornamental which invades riparian areas. It has a round stem, and the bright purple flowers grow in a tightly packed flower head.



### WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Purple loosestrife invades wetlands and displaces native vegetation.
- It supplies little food or habitat to wildlife.

**Purple loosestrife is a Class B Noxious Weed.**

**Control is required in Jefferson County.**



**Hardhack**, (*Spiraea douglasii*—native), has a round stem and fluffy, pinkish flowers arranged in tight clusters.

## DISTRIBUTION:

Purple loosestrife has been found in at least 8 locations in Jefferson County. Most are small, have been hand-pulled and will be monitored closely. One large infestation responded very well to bio-control.

## ECOLOGY:

- Purple loosestrife grows in wet sites, especially ones that have been disturbed by human activity.
- It is a perennial with a spreading root system. The stems die down each year but the woody root system remains in the ground.
- A mature plant can produce 2.7 million seeds which can be dispersed by wind, water, humans or animals. Purple loosestrife reproduces by seed or by sprouting from underground stems or root fragments.

## CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control.

- **Do not buy** or plant purple loosestrife or **any** of its cultivars.
- **Avoid** introducing soil or gravel from areas known to have purple loosestrife.
- **Remove** seedlings when young because they can usually be pulled easily and they have not had an opportunity to reproduce.
- **Replant** newly weeded areas with a desirable (preferably native) plant species, to discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly, bag or burn seed pods (carefully!) or fragments that may sprout.

**HANDPULLING** is recommended for small populations and isolated stems. The plants should be pulled out before they have set seed. The entire rootstock must be pulled since regrowth from root fragments is possible. Minimize disturbance to soil and native plants. Remove uprooted plants and broken stems, since they can resprout.

**MOWING** may be effective if done frequently and if the cut stems dry rapidly. Otherwise, cut stem pieces can send out roots and establish new plants.

**FLOODING** has been used as a control strategy, but is recommended only for large populations because of the problems with maintaining high water levels, and the fact that other plants are also killed.

**BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:** Several species of European flies, weevils or beetles have been released in Washington as biological controls for Purple loosestrife. *Galerucella spp* seem to be especially effective and are available for release.

**HERBICIDES** can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying a herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system) are recommended. These are most effective on young, actively growing plants because the herbicide moves around the plant more quickly. Also, herbicide is more easily absorbed by clean, new leaves.

- **Note:** Most herbicides will **NOT** prevent germination of weed seeds already in the soil, so monitoring and retreatment are necessary.

**Warning:** Purple loosestrife usually grows close to water and any herbicide application near or over water requires a permit and a specially licensed applicator.

**Call the Weed Board for specific herbicide advice**

**CALL IF YOU SEE THIS PLANT!**

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