

“A Field Guide to Terrestrial Invasive Plants” – Published by the WI DNR – PG 69

Purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*



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Purple loosestrife is a wetland perennial that grows 3-7' tall on 4 to 6-sided, somewhat woody stems. Plants get larger and more bush-like with each year of growth.

**Leaves:** Opposite; entire; downy; each pair of leaves is at right angles to the next pair above or below; occasionally leaves appear in groups of three.

**Flowers:** Individual flowers have 5-7 pink-purple petals surrounding small, yellow centers; arranged on spikes. Blooms July-September.

**Fruits & seeds:** Fruit is a 2-valved capsule. “Sterile” purple loosestrife cultivars can cross pollinate with other cultivars and native *Lythrum alatum* to produce seed.

**Roots:** A large, woody taproot with extensive rhizomes can send out 30-50 shoots.

**Similar species:** Northern willow-herb (*Epilobium ciliatum*; native) and hairy willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*; invasive) (see a-4) are perennials that resemble purple loosestrife but can be distinguished from it by round stems and

smaller, 4-petaled, pink flowers. Hairy willow-herb is also covered by long spreading hairs.

**Ecological threats:**

- Purple loosestrife invades many types of wetlands including, wet meadows, marshes, river and stream banks, ponds, lake edges and ditches.
- Once established it can quickly form dense stands that displace other emergent wetland species.
- It has been planted as an ornamental.

**Control:**

- Manual/Mechanical: Cut and remove flowering spikes to prevent seed production for that year; plants will resprout.
- Chemical: Foliar spray with triclopyr, imazapyr, or aquatic approved glyphosate in the fall when the plant is reaching dormancy. Cut-stump treat with aquatic approved glyphosate.
- Biological: Biological control is an option.