



Noxious and Invasive Weed Program - <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/weedcontrol>

Prohibited Noxious Weeds

Purple Loosestrife – *Lythrum salicaria* (L.)



Noxious Weed Classification – Purple Loosestrife is listed as a Prohibited – Control noxious weed in Minnesota. Efforts must be made to prevent seed maturation and dispersal of plants into new areas. Failure to comply with the Minnesota Noxious Weed Law (Minnesota Statutes 18.75 -18.91) may result in an enforcement action by the county or local municipality.

Origin – Native to Europe and Asia

Impacts – Purple loosestrife aggressively invades lakes, rivers, and wetlands, creates large monocultures, and significantly decreases the biological diversity of native plant and wildlife populations.

Description – A semi-aquatic perennial species that typically forms a dense bushy growth of many erect stems reaching heights of approximately 4-7 feet tall and is highly visible from July through September because of its robust purple flowering spikes. Leaves are smooth-edged, slender, pointed and arranged in opposite pairs along ridged stems. Showy spikes of flowers develop at the tops of each stem consisting of many individual 5-7 petaled purple flowers. Purple loosestrife reproduces both by seed and vegetative propagation which allows it to quickly invade new landscapes. Each flower spike can produce thousands of tiny seeds that are easily disburbed by wind, water, snow, animals, and humans. Large roots develop over time and store high levels of nutrients providing the plant with reserves of energy early in the spring or during stressful periods.

Habitat – Purple loosestrife prefers wet soils or standing water. Loosestrife plants are typically found in poorly drained soils of road right-of-ways and trails, drainage ditches, culverts, lake shores, stream banks, and a variety of wetland habitats.

Distribution in Minnesota – Purple loosestrife is found throughout Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources estimates that infestations have been recorded in 77 of Minnesota's 87 counties, covering 58,000 acres of lake, river, and wetland habitats.



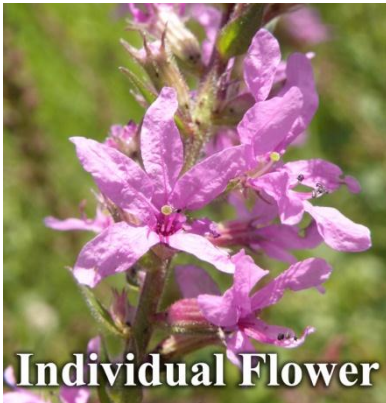


Control and Management – Hand-pulling or digging is only recommended when a few plants are discovered on a property. To successfully control purple loosestrife in this manner, the entire root system has to be removed from the soil to prevent re-sprouting of new stems. Checking the site periodically for several years is recommended to ensure that new seedlings or re-sprouts can be destroyed.

Mowing or cutting is not practical for sites where loosestrife is growing in an aquatic or semi-aquatic environment.

However, if conditions permit, and if executed prior to flowering, mowing or cutting can reduce seed production. Re-sprouts will vigorously appear following mowing, so follow-

up cutting will be necessary to prevent seed production during the growing season. Make sure to wash equipment thoroughly following mowing to prevent spread of seeds to new areas.



Various herbicides have been used successfully against purple loosestrife in Minnesota. **CAUTION: due to the nature of purple loosestrife existing in or near aquatic habitats consult with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources or check with your local University of Minnesota extension agent, or a state certified herbicide applicator for assistance and recommendations.** There are several businesses with certified herbicide applicators on staff in Minnesota that can be hired to perform chemical applications for purple loosestrife and other noxious weed species.

Biological control, using host-specific natural enemies of purple loosestrife, is a popular form management for this species in Minnesota. Biological control agents feed specifically on purple loosestrife plants and have been shown to provide a long-term sustainable management solution. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Inspectors, oversees a statewide biological control program for this noxious weed that is free of charge to landowners. To learn more about biological control, contact MN DNR or your County Agricultural Inspector.



PERSISTENCE IS THE KEY!

Controlling purple loosestrife infestations can take several years to achieve satisfactory results, especially on stands that are several years old and have an established seed bank. Follow-up of initial management attempts is critical to ensure that the plant population is decreasing.