

# Purple loosestrife

Lythraceae *Lythrum salicaria*



- Origin:** Europe and Asia. Escaped ornamental
- Description:** 2 to 8 feet tall bushy plant found in wet areas
- Color:** Green leaves and purple flowers
- Roots:** Taproot, fibrous and extensive. Root pieces can reproduce new plants
- Stems:** Woody and 4-sided. Stem pieces can produce new plants
- Leaves:** 2 to 5 inches long, alternate, lance-shaped and whorled on the stems with distinctive veins parallel to the edges
- Flowers:** Reddish-purple, 1 to 3 inches long with 5 to 7 petals and tightly grouped in long, vertical heads (racemes). Bloom from the bottom up from June thru September
- Seeds:** 3 million seeds per plant. Primarily reproduces by seed



**Viability:** 5 to 20 years

**Toxicity:** Not noted

**Lookalikes:** Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*)

Purple loosestrife can be found along riverbanks, ditches, and wet meadows throughout the state. Infestations rapidly replace native vegetation, can impede water flow in canals and ditches, and have little wildlife habitat value.

If purple loosestrife is left unchecked, the wetland eventually becomes a monoculture of loosestrife.

The key to effective control of purple loosestrife is early detection when infestations are small. It is fairly easy to control small numbers of loosestrife plants when the seedbank in the soil is small. Eradicating large populations is much more difficult.

Biological control should only be considered when populations of loosestrife have become too large or are inaccessible.

Small loosestrife infestations should be eradicated by hand-pulling or herbicide application.

On the backside of this sheet are purple loosestrife management recommendations.

If you have any questions, please contact the Weld County Public Works Dept., Weed Division at (970) 400-3770 or visit <https://www.weldweeds.org>



## **Recommended range and pasture management methods:**

### **Cultural**

Prevent the establishment of new infestations by minimizing disturbance and seed dispersal.

### **Mechanical**

Hand removal of isolated individuals can be effective on a small scale. Hand pulling should be conducted prior to seed set.

It is important to remove the entire rootstalk of the plant to avoid regrowth from root fragments.

### **Biological**

A mandatory **A list** species for eradication, biological control should primarily be considered when populations of loosestrife have become large or are inaccessible.

Two species of beetles (*Galerucella californiensis* and *Galerucella pucilla*) are proving to be effective in the control of purple loosestrife. Insects should be used on large infestations only, and releases of at least 500 beetles per infested site are needed. Insects can be obtained from the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Insectary. Go to <https://ag.colorado.gov/conservation/palisade-insectary>.

### **Herbicides**

Purple loosestrife is found in very wet soils, so great care should be used when using herbicides so as not to harm other water plants.

For early-season control of seedling and regrowth plants less than 1 to 2 feet tall, use of an aquatic-labeled 2,4-D is effective. Look for seedlings in late May or early June where adult plants have grown.

The herbicide Garlon 3A is effective on purple loosestrife and like 2,4-D is specific to broadleaved plants.

Rodeo is effective on mature plants at the pre-flowering to post-bloom stages. Use with caution, this is a non-selective herbicide and will kill all other vegetation that is sprayed. Be sure to clip and properly dispose of flowerheads before applying Rodeo. This will assist in the prevention of seed spread.

<b><u>Herbicide</u></b>	<b><u>Rate</u></b>	<b><u>Application Timing</u></b>	<b><u>Comments</u></b>
Aquatic 2,4-D Amine	1.0 to 2 qts./acre OR 1.0 to 2.0 oz/gal water	Early spring – prevents seed formation only. Retreatment will be necessary.	DO NOT apply when outside temperatures will exceed 85 degrees. Add non-ionic surfactant @ 0.32 oz/gal water or 1 qt/100 gal water.
Rodeo (glyphosate) <b>Non-selective</b>	1 to 2 qts/acre OR 1 to 2 oz/gal water	Summer – during flowering stage	Cut and properly dispose of flowerheads before applying Rodeo. Add an aquatic labeled non-ionic surfactant @ 0.32 oz/gal water or 1 qt/100 gal water. <i>Will kill all vegetation it touches</i>

**ALWAYS READ, UNDERSTAND, AND FOLLOW HERBICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS**

*The herbicide label is the LAW*