

Purple loosestrife

(*Lythrum salicaria*)

Low priority AIS present in
Lower Wisconsin River basin

What is it?

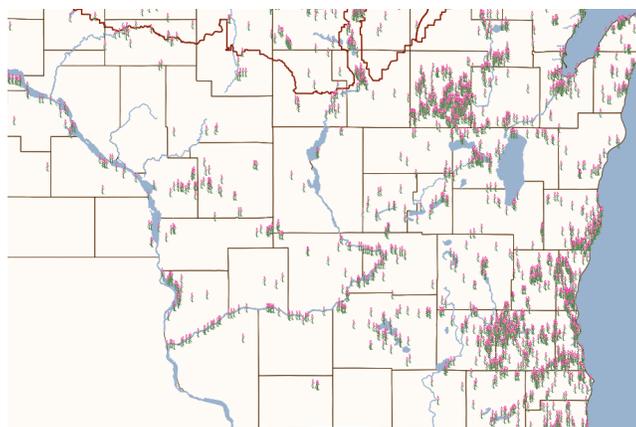
Purple loosestrife is a wetland plant, growing in freshwater wet meadows, marshes, river and stream banks, pond edges, reservoirs, and ditches. It prefers moist soils but can tolerate a wide range of conditions. It can withstand shallow flooding, and tolerates up to 50% shade. It flowers from July until September or October. A mature plant produces about 2,700,000 seeds a year.

Where is it?

Purple loosestrife is widely spread in Wisconsin, with 70 of the 72 counties reporting populations. It is found throughout the Lower Wisconsin River basin.

How does it spread?

Purple loosestrife was likely brought to North America in the 1800s both intentionally, as an ornamental plant, and unintentionally, by ships dumping ballast or European raw sheep wool that contained seeds. Humans have continued to transport it throughout the U.S. as a landscaping plant and as a food source for bees due to its nectar-producing capabilities. Purple loosestrife spreads naturally through either vegetative spread or through seed dispersal. Additionally, animals and humans can be a vector of transport when seeds stuck in mud are attached to bodies, equipment, or vehicles.



Southern Wisconsin distribution of purple loosestrife
(GLIFWC, 2011)

Why do we care?

Purple loosestrife can form monotypic stands that outcompete native wetland plants and can change the soil and water chemistry of the ecosystem. It can have a negative impact on tadpoles and birds, such as black terns, least bitterns, pied-billed grebes and marsh wren. Additionally, other marsh birds that prefer to nest in native marsh grasses are negatively impacted by purple loosestrife stands since the native grasses, sedges and flowering plants supply a higher quality of cover, food, or nesting sites.

What can we do?

Removal by cutting and pulling before flowering begins and seeds are developed is recommended for small populations only. Herbicides, such as Rodeo or Roundup may be used. The best technique is to cut the purple loosestrife stems at knee level and then to apply the herbicide directly onto the stump of the cut stem. Biocontrol is recommended for heavy infestations. The rearing and release of *Galerucella* beetles, used for biocontrol, can be done by volunteers. Wisconsin's Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol is a long-standing, successful beetle-raising program.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Wisconsin law requires you to:

- **Inspect** boats, trailers, and equipment.
- **Remove** all attached aquatic plants and animals.
- **Drain** all water from boats, vehicles and equipment.
- **Never move** plants or live fish away from a waterbody.

If you suspect that you have found an invasive species call 1-888-WDNR-INFO (1-888-936-7463) to report it.



Purple loosestrife
(USGS)