

Controlling the Invasive Purple Loosestrife

Purple loosestrife is an invasive plant that grows in wet areas, or on dry land. It is an erect perennial herb standing three to ten feet tall. Its average height is five feet. It can create a dense root system that chokes out other plants, and it can spread easily. It has a long flowering period, which can be from late June July through August, with purple flowers that are located in long spikes at the tip of its branches. Its leaves are opposite or whorled on a square, sometimes woody stem. Purple loosestrife's ability to spread contributes to its success as an invader. One adult purple loosestrife plant can produce 2.5 million to 2.7 million seeds annually. Seeds are roughly the size of ground pepper grains and are viable for many years. They may remain dormant in the soil until conditions are right for germination. These seeds are easily dispersed and transported by water, wind, bird feathers, animal fur, footwear, boats, boat trailers and car tires.

Physical Control of purple loosestrife is possible for smaller stands of plants (fewer than about 100 plants). If you find any, here is how you can help.

1. If you have your cell phone, take a photo before cutting any flowers. Try to include some identifying feature, such as a house, an unusual tree, a rock, or a dock. Please turn on the location feature on your phone so coordinates of your photo will be recorded.
2. If you have a 6' fiberglass driveway marker, place it at the plant location.
3. The best solution is to physically remove the plant from the soil. Removal should ensure that all root and plant pieces are dug out of the soil, but if that isn't possible, removing the flowers would help stop the spread that season. The best time to work on purple loosestrife is before the flowers fall off, because they then make seeds, which can spread during removal..
4. Place **all** roots, fragments, flowers and seed pods in a zip lock bag and dispose of them at the Norway Transfer Station. The seeds remain viable at campfire temperatures thus the need for higher incinerator temperatures. You can dispose of the stems any way you wish.
5. Contact George Morton, Chair of the Shoreline Invasive Program (cell 207-838-2821 or email: bizmorton@yahoo.com) so he can continue to map where the plant exists and give you further guidance.

See photos on next page

Purple Loosestrife

