

Purple loosestrife

Adams County
Weed Department
9755 Henderson Rd
Brighton, CO
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Key ID Points

1. Showy rose-purple flowers bloom in long vertical racemes.
2. Lance-shaped leaves have smooth edges.

Purple loosestrife Identification and Management



Identification and Impacts

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a non-native, tap-rooted, perennial forb. It is native to Europe and was introduced to North America as an ornamental plant for gardens and has escaped into natural areas such as streambanks and shallow ponds. Purple loosestrife reproduces primarily by seed. A single, mature plant can produce up to 3 million seeds per year. The seeds can remain viable in the soil for 5 to 20 years. Pieces of roots or stems also can produce new plants. Purple loosestrife produces multiple 4-sided stems that can grow 2 to 8 feet tall. Leaves are 2 to 5 inches long, lance-shaped and whorled on the stems. Flowers are tightly grouped in long, vertical heads; they bloom from the bottom up on heads. They are reddish-purple in color, about 1 inch long, and have 5 to 7 petals. Flowers appear from late June through September.

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. Infested wetlands eventually become 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 seed bank in the soil is small. Eradicating large populations is much more difficult. Biological control should primarily be considered when populations of loosestrife have become large or are inaccessible. Small loosestrife infestations should be eradicated by hand-pulling or herbicide application.

Purple loosestrife is designated as an "A" list species on the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. It is required to be eradicated wherever found in the State. For more information visit www.ag.state.co.us.

What if purple loosestrife is growing in your garden? There are many planting alternatives that are better suited to Colorado and beneficial to wildlife. Alternatives include spotted gayfeather, Rocky Mountain Penstemon, beebalm, purple coneflower, and Colorado Columbine.

On the backside of this sheet are purple loosestrife management recommendations. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the Adams County Weed Department at 303-637-8115. Please visit our website www.adamscountyextension.org.



Lythrum salicaria

**CULTURAL**

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

**BIOLOGICAL**

Two species of beetles (*Galerucella calmarjenses* and *Galerucella pucilla*) are proving to be effective on large infestations only. Releases of at least 500 beetles per infested site are required.

*Biocontrols are not included in the prescribed management plans by the State for eradication of purple loosestrife. Exceptions are granted for very large infestations. *
For more information, contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture, 970-464-7916.

**MECHANICAL**

Hand removal of isolated individuals can be effective on small infestations. Hand-pulling should be performed prior to seed set. It is important to remove the entire rootstalk of the plant to avoid regrowth from root fragments.

During the flowering stage, flowerheads must be cut and disposed of properly before a herbicide is applied. This will prevent or reduce seed production.

Integrated Weed Management:

Prevent new seeds from being added to the seed bank by managing purple loosestrife before it flowers or by clipping and disposing of the flowerheads prior to seed set.

Follow up control efforts the same growing season and for several years afterwards.

Maintain a healthy cover of perennial plants.

Purple loosestrife

HERBICIDES

The following are recommendations for herbicides that can be applied to range and pasturelands. Always read, understand, and follow the label directions. The herbicide label is the LAW!

Rates are approximate and based on equipment with an output of 30 gallons per acre. Please read label for exact rates.

HERBICIDE	RATE	APPLICATION TIMING
Garlon 3A	1-2 qts./acre or 1.3-2.5 oz/gal water	Apply in summer. If plants are flowering, cut and properly dispose of flowerheads before applying Garlon 3A. Add non-ionic surfactant @ 0.32oz/gal water or 1 qt/100 gal water.
Rodeo *nonselective, will kill all vegetation it contacts*	1-2 qts./acre or 1.3-2.5 oz/gal water	Apply in summer during the flowering stage. Cut and properly dispose of flowerheads before applying Rodeo. Add non-ionic surfactant @ 0.32oz/gal water or 1qt/100 gal water.
Aquatic 2,4-D Amine	1-2 qts/acre or 1.3-2.5 oz/gal water	Early spring - prevents seed formation only. Re-treatment will be necessary. DO NOT apply when outside temperatures will exceed 85 degrees. Add non-ionic surfactant @ 0.32oz/gal water or 1qt/100 gal water.

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