

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE ALERT

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a non-native, water loving, perennial originally found in Eurasia, introduced to America in the 1800's. This aggressive plant has spread throughout the Eastern U.S. crowding out native vegetation and creating dense, single species stands.

As an introduced species to America, Purple Loosestrife has left its predators and competitors behind, growing unchecked and easily exploiting damaged or stressed wetland environments.

Left alone, Purple Loosestrife quickly spreads and chokes out diverse native species, dominating an area with thick stands. The diverse native vegetation that characterize our valuable wetlands is forced out and replaced by dense single species stands.

Much of our wildlife depends upon native species and the habitat they provide. The invasion of Purple Loosestrife produces devastating effects upon our wetland, channel, stream, and lake areas. Community efforts to control its spread are necessary for the preservation of our natural areas.

The impact of this weed on North American wetlands and riparian (river side) areas has been disastrous. Purple Loosestrife is present in Oswego County and its control is imperative for the health of our valuable natural habitats.

IDENTIFICATION

HEIGHT (Mature Plant)

1 1/2 to over 10 feet tall.

BLOOMING SEASON

July through late August.

FLOWERS

Purple magenta color. Numerous and found on a long spike. Individual flowers have 5 to 7 petals.

LEAVES

Generally opposite each other and smooth edged.

STEMS

Have four flat sides (almost square) and are semi-woody at the base.

ROOTS

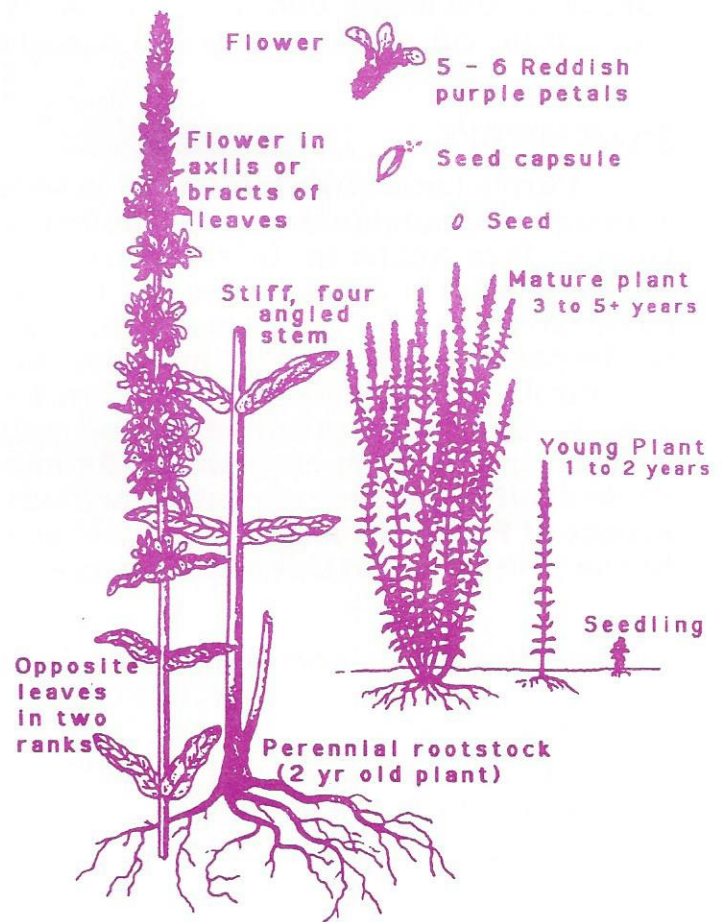
Woody and fibrous forming a dense root system mat with a well-developed taproot.

WINTER AND SPRING

The sturdy rigid stems stay standing through the seasons supporting dense spiraling rows of dark brown seed capsules.

* **Reproduction and Spread**

Up to 300,000 seeds can be produced on each stalk. Pieces of stems or roots are also capable of new plant generation. Seeds and plant material dispersal is aided by wind, water, and mud transported by humans and animals.



(Above) Structure, growth forms and field identification of Purple Loosestrife.

(DRAWING NOT TO SCALE)

-WHAT YOU CAN DO-

TO CONTROL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE IN OSWEGO COUNTY

- Minimize disturbance** of natural systems, especially wetlands. Disturbed or stressed areas are extremely susceptible to invasion and proliferation of Purple Loosestrife. Disturbance includes boat wakes that result in erosion and soil exposure. **Observe "NO WAKE" regulations in channel, stream, and wetland areas.**
- Don't plant or encourage the growth of Purple Loosestrife**, despite its apparent beauty.
- If you disturb soil on your property, **look for signs of Purple Loosestrife and destroy all plants.**
- Be careful of accidental transportation** of plant parts and seeds on boats, motors, and trailers.
- Work with neighbors to help keep each other informed** about this warning and future developments.
- Hand pull clusters of Purple Loosestrife** taking care to extract **the whole plant including roots.** Then burn all of the plant.

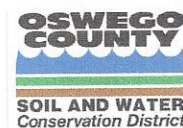
** The best time to pull and destroy Purple Loosestrife is before the seeds have a chance to mature and spread. Any time is better than no time, yet preventing the spread of the seeds and plant pieces is the main concern. Therefore, June through early July, when the plants are easily identified, is best.*

PRESENT SITUATION

Purple Loosestrife infestation is widespread throughout Oswego County wetlands, although its abundance and distribution varies. Overall, the percentage of Purple Loosestrife is greater in the southern coastal wetlands and less in those found in the northern areas of Oswego County. The more disturbance or human impact on an area the more extensive the Purple Loosestrife problem. Total eradication of Purple Loosestrife may not be possible at this point, however, containment is a necessity. There is no single answer to controlling Purple Loosestrife; yet various control techniques may be helpful under specific circumstances and in unique problem areas. Harvesting, chemical, and biological controls are all under examination for more widespread use. The key to control lies in implementing a variety of control methods in different combinations. **The most important aspect of Purple Loosestrife control is an informed public that is willing to participate in the protection of Oswego County's unique natural areas.**

For more information or other aquatic weed information sheets, contact:

Oswego County
Environmental Management Council
46 East Bridge Street
Oswego, New York 13126
(315) 349-8292



3105 State Route 3
Fulton, N.Y. 13069
315/592-9663

www.oswegosoilandwater.com

June 1995