



## Weed of the Month: Purple Loosestrife

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.



### **Identification:**

Purple loosestrife is a hardy herb perennial. It displays showy purple-magenta flowers that are located on a three inch to three-foot spike. At its maturity, it can grow anywhere from three to ten feet tall with a dense bushy appearance with a woody base. Purple loosestrife also forms erect stems that are green to purple and have square cross sections. In addition, it has leaves that are opposite with smooth margins and can range from 0.75 – 1 inch long.

### **Invasive Behavior:**

Originating from Eurasia, Purple loosestrife has become very invasive to many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including marshes, riparian areas, lakeshores, floodplains, ditches, canals, and some upland sites. It reproduces by seed and rhizomes and can be spread by mechanical means, wind, and water. Its bloom period ranges from the June to September months.

### **Impact:**

The presence of Purple loosestrife can have serious ecological and economic consequences. The plant rapidly degrades wetlands diminishing the wildlife habitat. An isolated colony of Purple loosestrife can spread over entire wetland sites in just one season displacing native vegetation and wildlife. Purple loosestrife can also clog irrigation systems and take over meadows and pastures for grazing causing concern to both growers and ranchers.

Top Left- Purple loosestrife infestation.

Middle Right – Purple loosestrife flower head.



Bottom Left- Purple loosestrife seed.

Bottom Right- Purple loosestrife at adult stage.





**Control and Management:**

Early detection is one of the most important factors when it comes to the eradication of Purple loosestrife. Mechanical methods include pulling, disking, and cutting. Pulling or manually digging of early infestations helps prevent the establishment of dense populations. Once deeply rooted, the removal process becomes challenging. Biological control is also available by releasing insect agents known to significantly reduce Purple loosestrife populations. Chemical control methods are most effective during the post emergence stage and should be repeated a year after the initial application for maximum results. Broadcast foliar herbicide are most commonly recommended. This practice should be used judiciously to minimize impact on non-target species.

Top Left- Young Purple loosestrife.  
  
Bottom Left- Adult Purple loosestrife leaves.

**Prevention:**

Preventing the spread of Purple loosestrife is key to its control. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office at **(530) 822-7500**.



By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Purple loosestrife and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

For more information about Purple loosestrife, feel free to visit the Weed Research and Information Center website at: <https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/natural%20areas/wr L/Lythrum salicaria.pdf>

For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at: <https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

- Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office

