



## Purple Loosestrife

*Lythrum salicaria*

**Habit:** Herbaceous, perennial, 0.5 to 2.0 m (1.5-6 ft) tall, densely pubescent, especially the upper part of the plant, pubescence variable; strongly developed taproot becomes woody with age.

**Leaves:** Lanceolate to almost linear, opposite or whorled; sessile to somewhat clasping; 3-10 cm (1-4 in); larger leaves at the base.

**Stems:** Four-angled; glabrous to pubescent.

**Flowers:** Numerous, purple (also white or light pink) with 5-7 petals; terminal spike-like inflorescences in axillary clusters of two to several; bloom July to October.

**Fruits/seeds:** Capsule with small seeds; prolific seed production.

**Habitat:** Shade intolerant but can tolerate up to 50% shade; found in disturbed wet areas; tolerates a wide range of soil types but prefers organic soils.

**Reproduction:** By seed; or vegetatively by resprouting from cut stems and regenerating from pieces of root stock.

**Similar species:** Native winged loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum*) has solitary flowers borne in axils of small bracts; fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) has 4-petaled flowers and leaves taper at base.

**Comments:** Native to Eurasia. This species is restricted under Michigan law; attractive but persistent weed; spreads vigorously in moist soil conditions; crowds out native wetland plant species.

**Monitoring & rapid response:** Monitor wetlands, lakes, stream banks, and ditches in July and August when plants are in bloom. Hand pull seedlings; remove all flower and seed heads. Foliar herbicide treatment after peak bloom (late August) provides effective control but may damage non-target plants. *Galerucella* beetles (*G. californiensis*, *G. pusilla*) provide effective biocontrol although the beetle colonies may die out on smaller loosestrife populations. See Online Resources section in the back of this field guide for information on the beetles.

Permits are usually required for herbicide use in water bodies and wetlands. For information see MDEQ's Aquatic Nuisance Control website at:

[www.michigan.gov/deqinlandlakes](http://www.michigan.gov/deqinlandlakes)



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Photo: Steven J. Baskauf



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Photo: Elizabeth Czarapata



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