

# Purple Loosestrife

(*Lythrum salicaria*)



## Key ID Features

**Arrangement:** opposite/whorled

**Leaves:** simple, lance shaped

**Flowers:** purple/pink flowers in long spike at top of stem, flowers have 5-7 petals

**Fruit:** seed capsule enclosed in hairy sepals, reddish-brown seeds

**Stem:** square, upright, hairy

**Root:** thick taproot with lateral roots

**Growth Habit:** multi-stemmed herbaceous perennial, can grow 3-5 ft. tall



## The Impact

Purple Loosestrife (also called “Purple Lythrum” or “Spiked Loosestrife”) was brought to the United States from Europe in the 1800s as a garden plant and in the ballast of ships. Purple Loosestrife can produce over 2.7 million seeds per year per plant, quickly dominating wetlands and displacing native plants. It can hybridize with the native and rare Winged Loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum*), potentially depleting the native species gene pool.

When the plants decompose, they release tannic acid into the water, increasing the acidity of the environment, which has been shown to increase the mortality rate of the American Toad.

## Quick Facts

**Plant Family:** Lythraceae

**Origin:** Europe

**Habitat:** disturbed areas, marshes, meadows and fields, swamps, edges of wetlands, rivers, and lakes

**Present in Vermont?:** yes

**Method of Spread:** primarily by seeds dispersed via water

**Status:** Class B Noxious Weed\*  
<http://bit.ly/VTPlantQuarantine>

*\*The Vermont Noxious Weed Quarantine listing means it is illegal to buy, sell, or transport this species in Vermont*

**REPORT IT!** This is an Early Detection Species. Please report any sightings at: [vtinvasives.org/get-involved/report-it](http://vtinvasives.org/get-involved/report-it)

## Native Plant Alternatives



David Cappaert, Bugwood.org

**Bee Balm / Wild Bergamont**  
(*Monarda fistulosa*): attracts bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, grows in a variety of soils, can be used to make tea



Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org

**Pickerelweed**  
(*Potentilla cordata*): attracts bees and butterflies, grows on shorelines and wetlands, young stems and leaves are edible



Invasive: Purple Loosestrife

Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California, Bugwood.org

## Common Look-alikes

Fireweed



Gil Woiciech, Polish Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org

Blue Vervain



Rob Routledge, Sault College, Bugwood.org

### Distinguishing features

**Arrangement:**  
alternate leaves

### Distinguishing features

**Flower:** bluish purple with 5 fused petals

## Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on **VTinvasives.org** and these additional resources:

<http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Purple-Loosestrife-BMP-April-2016-final.pdf>

References: Ohio State University Weed Guide - Purple Loosestrife, Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program - Purple Loosestrife, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Purple Loosestrife, Noxious Weeds in King County, Washington - Purple Loosestrife, Ontario Invasive Species Factsheets (PDFs) - Purple Loosestrife

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