

THIS INVASIVE SPECIES IS COMMON IN WETLANDS AND ROADSIDES ACROSS NEW YORK

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a beautiful invasive terrestrial plant that can easily spread within the Lake George watershed. It has been historically used as a medicinal herb and ornamental plant. Purple loosestrife crowds out native species, reduces biodiversity, eliminates food sources for wildlife, and changes water flow patterns. This wetland perennial, native to Europe and Asia, was brought to the U.S. in the 1800s as an ornamental garden flower and in ballast dumped from ships.

Purple loosestrife has downy covered leaves with smooth edges, usually arranged in opposite or whorled pairs. Stalks are woody, red, and square in cross section. Flowers have five or six pink-purple petals surrounding small yellow centers. On mature plants, the woody rootstock has up to 50 stems emerging from it, creating a dense web that chokes out other



Purple loosestrife can grow as tall as 2 meters and can overwhelm wetlands, roadsides and open fields.

plants. Purple loosestrife can grow up to 2 meters tall. Mature plants can produce 2.7 million seeds each year. The tiny seeds, which are about the size of ground pepper, are transported by water, wind, and wildlife as well as by human activity. Cutting leads to spreading of this invasive plant.

Purple loosestrife is very hardy and infests areas where native communities have been disturbed by digging, moving soils, areas where tractors and bulldozers have been used, and areas that have been dredged. Purple loosestrife is lower in nutritional value than native species of plants so it is not a good food source for wildlife.

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Purple Loosestrife

LAKE GEORGE FACT SHEET

Platform nesting birds cannot use the stiff stems, and the stalks are not good brood cover for waterfowl. Most waterfowl will avoid wetlands that have become dominated by purple loosestrife. Due to these factors, once it is established it is not used or consumed and can out-compete other native species, growing dense and impenetrable.

Controlling the spread is important to protecting vital fish, wildlife and native plant habitat. Control can be achieved by digging up plants as well as hand pulling in June and July. Proper disposal of plants is recommended after removal. The best method of disposal is incineration. Do not compost purple loosestrife as this will allow for the spread of the plant. Biocontrol methods such as the release of non-native beetles from Europe have been conducted, but extreme caution must be taken when introducing one organism to control another. Chemical control is not recommended because purple loosestrife is usually located near water or in saturated soils.

Once established, stands of purple loosestrife are difficult and costly to remove. The best method is prevention. [Here are the best ways to prevent the spread of purple loosestrife around Lake George:](#)



Purple loosestrife is a beautiful, but invasive plant. It is hardy and can grow in a variety of conditions in wet areas and can rapidly degrade wetlands.

- Landscape with native plants;
- Do not compost terrestrial invasive plants;
- Clean tread and tires of vehicles, boats and trailers, gear and equipment;
- Remove invasive plants from your property by utilizing Best Management Practices or in consultation with professionals;
- Maintain an adequate buffer of robust native species along streams and shorelines;
- Do not degrade soils by clear cutting or dredging; and,
- Know the source of your mulch, topsoil or fill to ensure it is free of invasive species.

We need your help to protect Lake George from invasive species.

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