

Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*



Photo from www.nps.gov

Characteristics: square, woody stem~leaves are lance-shaped, stalkless, and heart-shaped or rounded at the base, and are whorled or opposite on the stem~Each rootstock can have 1- 50 stems emerging from it~ reaches from 4-10 feet in height~ usually covered by a downy pubescence~plants produce purple pink flowers with 5-7 petals

Introduction & Distribution: Introduced in the Northeastern U.S. And Canada in the 1800's for ornamental & medicinal uses and also by accident by seed in ship's ballast water and sediment- Now found in every state except for Florida

Problem: Out-competes and replaces native grasses, sedges, and other flowering plants that produce a higher quality nutrient source for wildlife~takes over and reduces habitat for wildlife and restricts native wetland species such as some federally endangered orchids(www.nps.gov)

Spread: Spreads vegetatively through underground stems at a rate of about one foot per year and also by seed dispersal, capable of producing 2-3 million, minute seeds per year which can be spread by traveling through waterways, waterfowl, animals, and humans

Management/ Prevention: When plants are young, digging and hand-pulling are effective management tools, but be sure to remove as much of the rootstock as possible because roots WILL sprout new plants~Cut and remove old flower spikes~there are 5 species of beetles approved to be released to control loosestrife~certain chemical applications can be used, but precaution must be taken near water~Avoid spreading seed by thoroughly rinsing, shoes, boats, trailers etc. when leaving loosestrife infested areas