

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

[*Lythrum salicaria* L.]

LYSA2



Fig. 1

UGA 1459323

Problem: Native to Eurasia,² purple loosestrife was introduced to the United States in the early 1800s via ballast and cargo.⁵ It is an aggressive weed that has displaced > 50% of native vegetation in some wetlands.⁶ Infestations lead to severe wildlife habitat degradation, loss of species diversity, decreased water flow and increased maintenance costs.³

Habit: Erect, perennial herb (Fig. 2).^{2,3,4}

Reproduction: Prolific seeder; produces > 2 million seeds per season;^{3,6} Wind and water dispersed.³

Leaves: Opposite or whorles in threes, sessile, lanceolate to linear 3 to 10 cm long (~1 ¼ to 4 in) (Fig. 2 and 3); larger leaf bases cordate.^{1,2,4}

Stems: Glabrous or more often pubescent;^{1,2} persistent woody base;⁴ to 2 m (6 ½ ft) (Fig. 2).^{1,2,4}

Flowers: July to September^{2,4} or October;³ Purple to pink and on dense terminal spike-like inflorescence. Individual flowers have 6 petals (Fig 4 and 5).²

Fruits/Seeds: Capsule containing many angular seeds; persist through



Fig. 2

UGA 1459315



Fig. 3

UGA 1552184

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Fig. 4

UGA 0022075



Fig. 5

UGA 0024065

winter on plant stalk.³

Habitat: Swamps, wet meadows, shores⁴ and floodplains.¹

Similar Species: Fireweed [*Chamerion angustifolium* (L.) Holub ssp. *circumvagum* (Mosquin) Hoch], blue vervain (*Verbena hastata* L.) and swamp loosestrife [*Decodon verticillatus* (L.) Elliott] are commonly confused with purple loosestrife. Fireweed has 4-petaled and stalked flowers and generally occurs in dryer habitats (Fig 6).^{1,4} Blue vervain has coarsely serrated leaves and much smaller flowers on spikes or heads (Fig. 7).^{1,4} Swamp Loosestrife has flowers bunched at the axils (junction of leaf and stem) (Fig. 8).^{1,4}



Fig. 6

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These species do not form dense and uniform stands in wetland areas like purple loosestrife.



Fig. 7

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Fig. 8

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