

Purple loosestrife

LYTHRACEAE - Loosestrife Family

Lythrum salicaria L.



Common Name: Purple loosestrife (purple lythrum, spiked loosestrife, salicaire)

Growth Form: Forb

Life Span: Perennial

Origin: Eurasia and Africa

Flowering Dates: July-September

Reproduction: Seeds and rhizomes

Height: 0.4-2.5 m (1.3-8 ft)

Inflorescence: Cymules arranged in spikes, terminal

Flower: Rose-purple corolla, cylindrical (4-6 mm long, up to 2 cm in diameter), petals 6 (5-7); petals crinkled; calyx teeth 6, teeth alternating with the petals; stamens 12

Fruit: Capsule (4-7 mm in diameter), cells 2; seeds many

Seed: Ovoid (1 mm long or less)

Leaves: Opposite or in whorls; blades simple, lanceolate (2-11 cm long, 5-15 mm wide), tips sharply pointed, base rounded or heart-shaped, margins entire, surfaces pubescent; sessile

Stems: Erect, not highly branched, usually from a woody base, 4-angled, surfaces without hair to pubescent

Underground: Taproot and short rhizomes

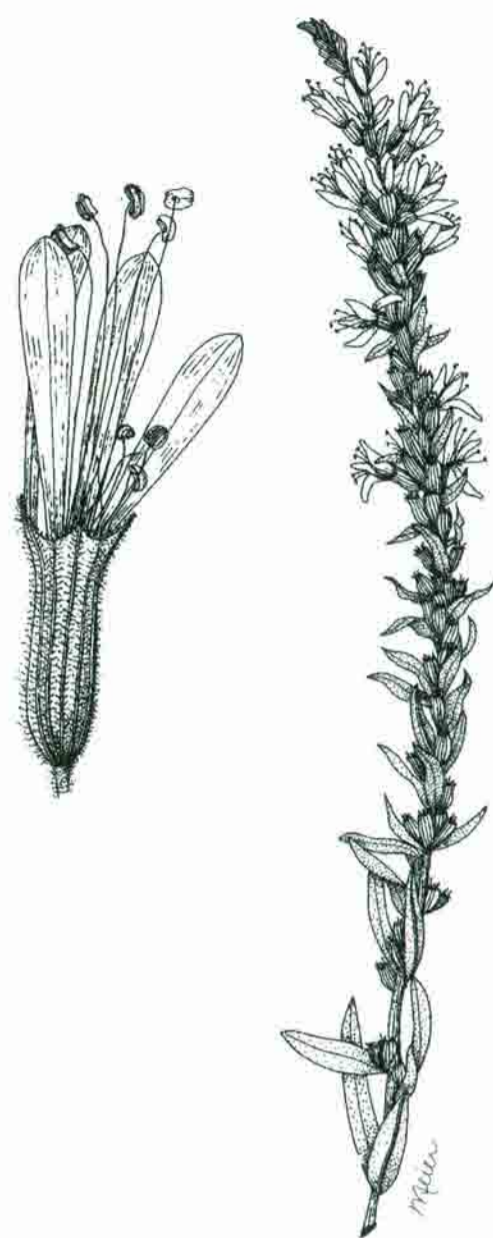
Where Found: Scattered across the region, less common in the southwestern Great Plains, in marshes, along rivers, ditches, and wet meadows. (NE, SD, ND, KS, OK, TX, MN, IA, MO, WY, CO, AB, SK, & MB)

Uses and Values: Purple loosestrife is an escaped ornamental. It is an excellent honey plant and was deliberately planted for this purpose.

Poisoning: None

Other: Purple loosestrife is rapidly and aggressively spreading and has been placed on the noxious weed list in some states. Several varieties have been developed which can cross with wild types and produce viable seed. It is extremely difficult to control, and concentrated efforts should be made to keep it from spreading.

Similar Species: Winged loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum* Pursh) and California loosestrife (*Lythrum californicum* Torr. & A. Gray) are native species similar in appearance. They differ from purple loosestrife by having solitary or paired flowers in the leaf axils rather than many flowers in terminal spikes and 6-8 stamens rather than 12. Winged loosestrife leaves are gray-green and often somewhat fleshy. California loosestrife has green, membranous leaves.



Flowers have six rose-purple petals.

Dense infestations crowd out native species.

