



# Purple Loosestrife

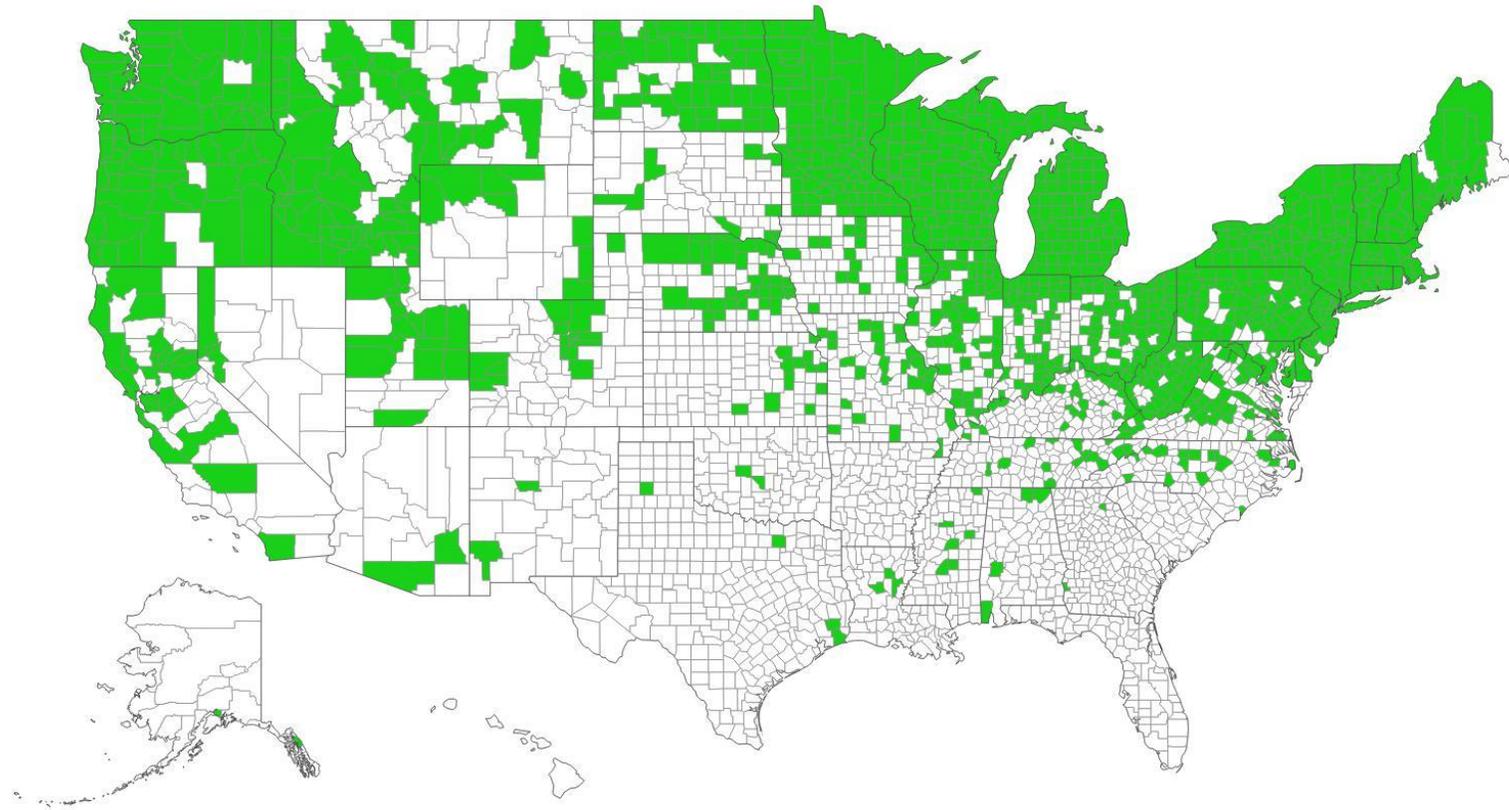
*Lythrum salicaria*

Lythraceae

# History of introduction



- ▶ Purple loosestrife is native to Europe and Asia. The species was unintentionally introduced to the United States' Great Lakes through contaminated solid cargo ship ballast as well as through the deliberate importation of seeds.
- ▶ The first discovery in the United States was in Lake Ontario in 1869. Purple loosestrife was sold and planted for decades as a decorative ornamental plant. However, due to its negative impacts on native plants and its ability to escape from cultivation, purple loosestrife is illegal to sell in most states.



**Legend**

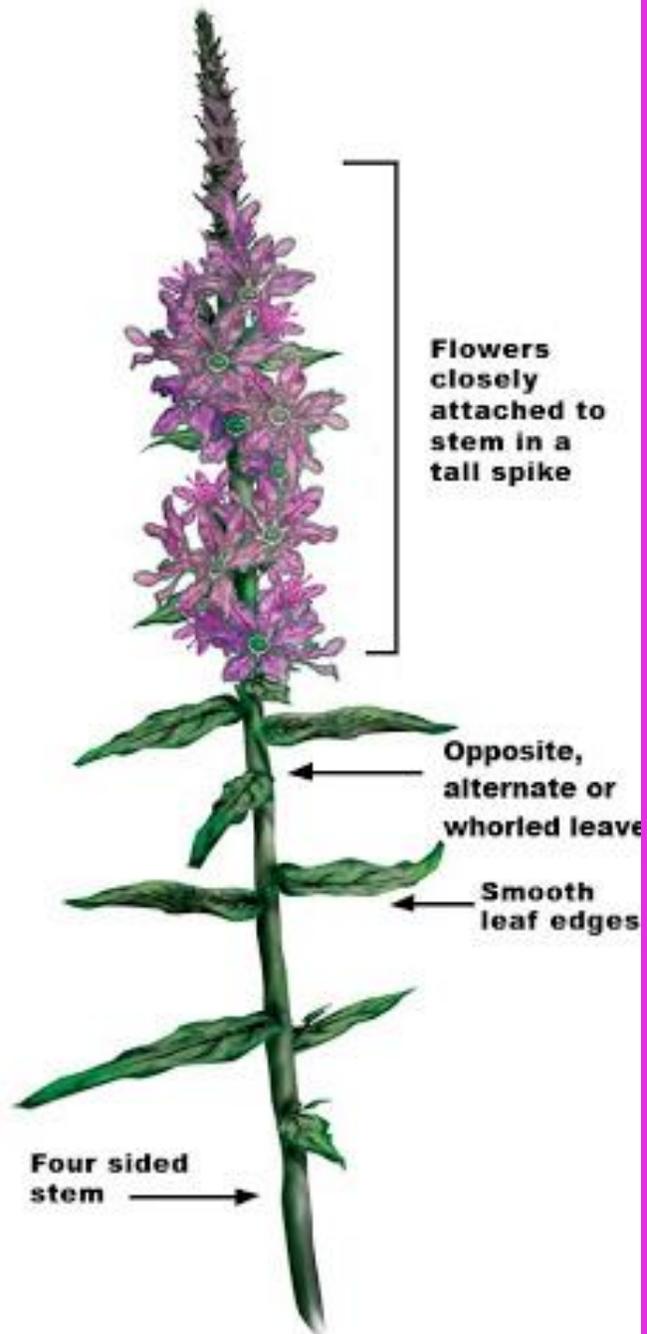
- No Data
- Species Reported

Map created : 5/27/2020

# EddMaps Purple Loosestrife Distribution

Data effective 5/27/2020

# Plant characteristics



## Appearance

- ▶ Purple loosestrife is a wetland plant with showy purple flowers arranged on flower spikes.

## Leaves and Stem

- ▶ Leaves are lance-shaped with smooth edges and grow up to four inches long. They are usually arranged in pairs opposite each other on the stem and rotated 90 degrees from the pair below. Leaves sometimes appear whorled (radiating out from a single point) around the stem. A recognizable feature is the square-shaped stem, which is generally four to six-sided. A single plant is made up of multiple woody stems.

## Flowers

- ▶ Individual flowers have five or six pink-purple petals surrounding small, yellow centers. Single flowers make up flower spikes, which can be up to one foot tall. Flowers bloom from early July through September.

## Seeds

- ▶ Purple loosestrife spreads primarily by seeds. When flowers drop off, capsules containing many tiny seeds appear in their place. Depending on location, plants may go to seed as early as late July. Each mature plant can produce up to 2.7 million seeds annually. As tiny as grains of sand, seeds are easily spread by water, wind, wildlife and humans. Germination can occur the following season, but seeds can also lay dormant for several years before sprouting.

## Roots

- ▶ Purple loosestrife produces thick, woody roots. On mature plants, roots are extensive and can send out 30 to 50 shoots, creating a dense web. Pieces of the roots and stem fragments can also produce new plants.

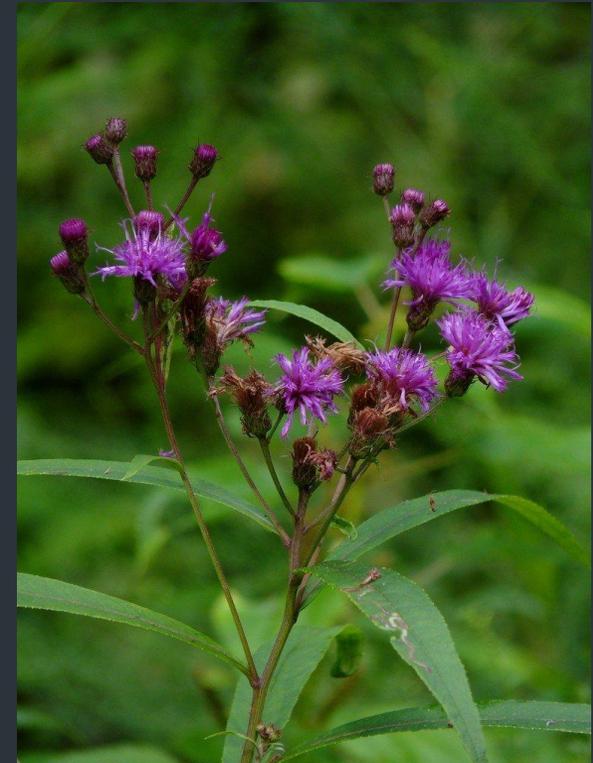
# Look-a-likes



Blue Vervain



Fireweed



Tall ironweed



Obedient plant



# Swamp Milkweed

- ▶ Purple loosestrife can be confused with the young shoots of Swamp milkweed that do not yet have flowers.
- ▶ We were able to distinguish between the young shoots of PL and SM as PL has sessile leaves and SM leaves have short petioles.

# Management steps



CUT



SPRAY



ROAST



Thank you

[sramer@carmelclayparks.com](mailto:sramer@carmelclayparks.com)

[jwoodruff@carmelclayparks.com](mailto:jwoodruff@carmelclayparks.com)