

# Purple Loosestrife

*Lythrum salicaria*

## Invasive Plant Alert

One of the biggest threats to natural ecosystems in Saanich is the spread of invasive non-native plants. The District of Saanich appreciates the cooperation of all residents in removing Purple Loosestrife from private property.

*For assistance see contacts on reverse.*

**Nicknamed the “beautiful killer”, Purple Loosestrife is a serious threat to wetlands in North America.**

### **Why is Purple Loosestrife a problem?**

- Aggressive, semi-aquatic, perennial invader.
- Serious threat to native ecosystems and wildlife habitat.
- Particularly impacts the structure and function of riparian and wetland areas.
- Agricultural areas can be lost by the spread of this species.
- Can produce 300,000 to 2.7 million seeds, spread by water, wind, wildlife and humans, remaining viable up to 20 years.

### **What does it look like?**

- Up to 2 m tall with pink/purple flower spikes.
- Numerous small flowers with 5-7 petals (June to September).
- Square, upright stems with long, smooth-edged, opposite leaves.

### **Could be confused with:**

- Hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*)
- Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*).
- Hedge Nettle (*Stachys Chamissonis var codeyae*)
- Lupines (*Lupinus spp.*)

### **Distribution:**

- Native to Eurasia, introduced to North America in the early 1800s.
- BC invasions are primarily in the southwest part of the province.

### **Habitat and biology:**

- Perennial, semi-aquatic plant growing from woody tap root and extensive rhizomes.
- Found predominantly in wetland areas: shorelines of lakes and rivers, ditches, estuaries, riparian meadows and floodplains.
- Found also in drier sites including pastures and croplands.
- Reproduces by seed and fragments of roots and stalks.
- Seedlings rapidly establish and flower within 8-10 weeks of germination.
- Flowers from June to September.
- Note: cultivated varieties (thought to be sterile) produce fertile seeds when cross-pollinated by wild plants.



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## What should you do?

- **Spread the word, not the plant:** don't buy or plant Purple Loosestrife.
- **Inform:** please contact Saanich (as below) to report locations.
- **Stop seed spread:** brush/clean off clothing, tires and equipment before leaving the infested area.
- **Remove:** if you have properly identified Purple Loosestrife on your property, use the best control methods (below) to eliminate it on your property.
- **Monitor:** annually return to the site in the spring for at least several years to continue treatment until it has been eliminated.
- **Replant:** after effectively eliminating this species, replant with non-invasive plants (such as appropriate native species).
- **Volunteer:** find out more about volunteering to control priority invasive species with Saanich at [www.saanich.ca/pullingtogether](http://www.saanich.ca/pullingtogether).

## Small infestations (up to 300 plants)

- Ideally, remove plants before flowering/going to seed.
- If flower and seed heads are present, cut them off and seal in a bag.
- Dig out plants and remove all the root mass (including pieces). New plants can grow from fragments of stalks and roots.
- Handpulling young plants (up to 2 years old) is possible in loose, wet or sandy soil; pull out slow and steady to remove all the roots.
- Consider covering the area with a thick layer of black plastic to slow down growth and seed production,
- Properly dispose of all plant parts (see below).
- Monitor and manage sites annually until clear.

## Large infestations

- Landowners can contact Saanich Environmental Services for assistance such as biological and chemical control options.
- Note that Saanich has a Pesticide Bylaw requiring permits for pesticide use.

## Proper Disposal

- The District of Saanich is in the process of developing options for invasive species disposal. Please call Environmental Services or check the website for updates ([www.invasives.saanich.ca](http://www.invasives.saanich.ca)).
- Currently, the best option is to place all plant parts in garbage bags labelled "invasive species/Purple Loosestrife" and take to Hartland Landfill.
- If flowers/seeds are present, cut them off carefully into a separate bag first and double-bag before disposing.
- DO NOT COMPOST.

## Other resources

Invasive Species Council of BC  
Coastal Invasive Species  
Committee  
King County Noxious Weed  
Program  
Report-a-Weed BC

## Who do you call?

Contact Saanich for assistance and more information about Purple Loosestrife, other invasive plants and volunteer opportunities.

### On Private Land:

Saanich Environmental Services:

250-475-5471 or [planning@saanich.ca](mailto:planning@saanich.ca).

### On Public Lands:

Saanich Parks:

250-475-5522 or [parks@saanich.ca](mailto:parks@saanich.ca).

[www.invasives.saanich.ca](http://www.invasives.saanich.ca)

## Noxious Weeds Bylaw No. 8080:

The District of Saanich requires all landowners clear their property of any noxious weeds and other vegetation that could spread or become a nuisance