

TACKLING

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Purple loosestrife was first introduced to eastern North America in the 1800s as a garden plant and unintentionally brought over by ships. It has invaded wetlands across the continent and is common in Metro Vancouver. It has strong roots and each plant can produce millions of seeds each year.

IMPACTS

Purple loosestrife can quickly overrun wetlands, lakeshores, marshes, wet meadows, and ditches. It decreases plant diversity, reducing food and habitat available for wildlife. This plant is highly attractive to pollinating insects, diverting them from the essential pollination of native and beneficial plants. Provincial regulations require land owners to control purple loosestrife.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial plant; the above-ground portions of the plant die back in winter
- **Stem:** Woody, square-shaped, 0.5-3 metres tall; young stems are green, turning reddish-brown with maturity; 30-50 stems per plant
- **Leaves:** 3-10 centimetres long, attached directly to the stem (no leaf stalks); usually grow on opposite sides of the stem
- **Flowers:** Pinkish-purple in dense spikes at the top of each stem; bloom from July to September
- **Seeds:** Small, dark brown capsules filled with many seeds



Purple loosestrife flowers

CREDIT: ISCMV



Stem and leaves

CREDIT: STEVE~H VIA FLICKR



Seed and capsule

CREDIT: GARY L. PIPER,
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY,
BUGWOOD.ORG

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade, or grow purple loosestrife. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent wetlands or other sensitive ecosystems. Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling purple loosestrife on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. Some methods may only be available for professionals. **Work at wetland sites may require permits from provincial or federal authorities and consultation with a qualified environmental professional.**

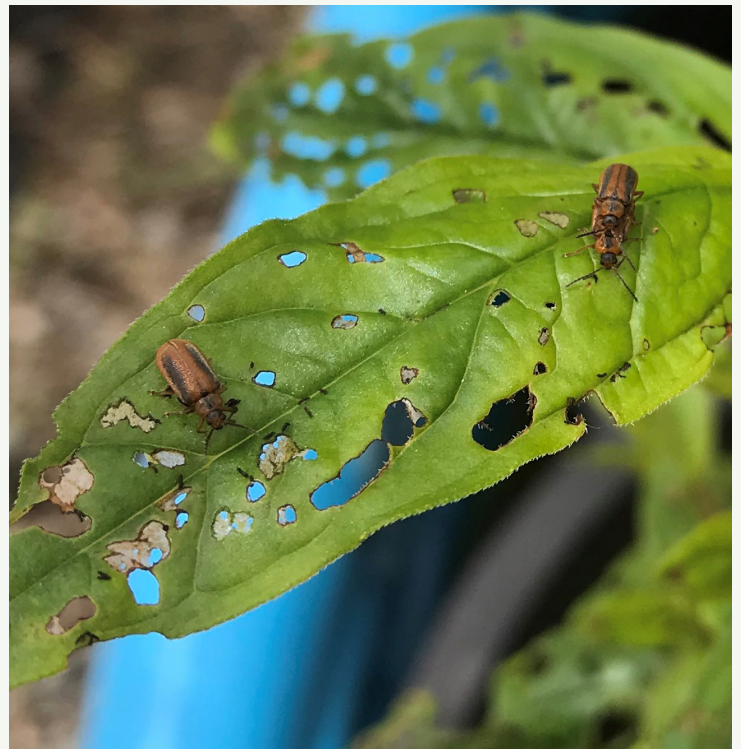
CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	Pull or dig, removing the entire plant including the roots	Individual plants or sites with less than 100 plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated pulling/digging required• To avoid spread, control should always take place before July, when the seeds begin to ripen
Biological	Release <i>Neogalerucella</i> beetles that will exclusively eat purple loosestrife plants	Sites with thousands of plants, enough to sustain the beetles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only recommended for professionals• Will reduce the number of plants, not eliminate them• May take many years to show results

Restore the area with native or non-invasive plants, monitor for regrowth, and remove seedlings for several years.

How Can You Help?

- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out growgreenguide.ca for suggestions.
- Remove any plant parts or seeds from clothing, pets, tools, vehicles, etc.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter, as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.
- Join a stewardship group and help remove invasive species from local parks.

For the complete set of best management practices for purple loosestrife, and other key invasive species, visit MetroVancouver.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



Neogalerucella beetles eating purple loosestrife