

Purple Loosestrife WATCH



How to Identify Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

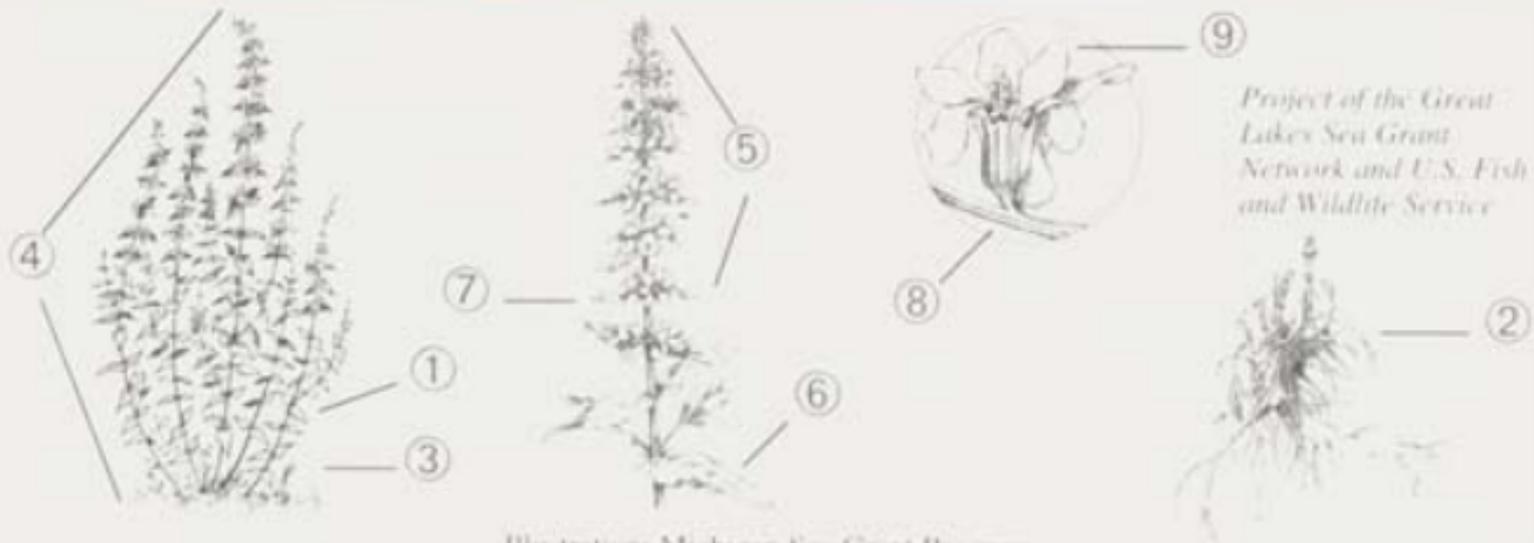


Illustration: Michigan Sea Grant Program

General Characteristics

① Mature plants have many stems that grow from a ② Root crown ③ Dead stems stand until spring ④ Height 3 to 7 feet (1 to 2 m) ⑤ Spike covered with many flowers ⑥ Downy, smooth-edged leaves ⑦ Leaves usually paired, opposite ⑧ Stem has ridges ⑨ Flower has several pink-purple petals

Purple Loosestrife

Purple loosestrife is an invasive perennial plant that is spreading rapidly in North American wetlands, shorelines, and roadside ditches. Thick stands of purple loosestrife crowd out native plants and reduce food, shelter, and nesting sites for wildlife, birds, turtles, and frogs. After multiple introductions in the 1800s for bee keeping, as an ornamental plant, and in discarded soil used as ballast on ships, this European species has invaded nearly every US state and at least six Canadian provinces.

Gardeners, waterfowl hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts should know how to identify purple loosestrife – detecting new infestations can prevent the spread of this plant. Report new sightings and help control purple loosestrife.

What you can do

- **Learn** to identify purple loosestrife (see back cover).
- **Do not transplant it!**

- **Avoid** planting seed mixtures containing purple loosestrife.
- **Remove** aquatic plants, seeds, and mud from equipment, clothing, and footwear.
- **Contact** a state agency below to get involved with control efforts in your area.
- **Report** new sightings – note exact location; wrap a segment of plant stem, leaves, and flower spike (if in season) in a wet paper towel, place in a sealed plastic bag; and call the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant Extension in Zion, IL, (847) 872-8677; the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology in Indianapolis, IN, (317) 232-4120; or the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign, IL, (217) 333-1005.

REMINDER: *Know the rules!*

Specimens are needed to confirm sightings, but some jurisdictions prohibit or discourage possession and transport of purple loosestrife and other invasive aquatic plants and animals. Contact your local natural resource management agency for instructions. Unauthorized introduction of plants or fish into the wild is illegal. Protect your property and our waters.