

Purple loosestrife

Lythraceae - *Lythrum salicaria*



What does it look like?

Purple loosestrife is an erect, summer-green perennial herb that grows 1-2m tall. The woody stems are square in cross-section. It has narrow leaves, which are usually paired and are heart-shaped at the base. From December to February it produces 20-25cm long spikes of purple-magenta flowers. The flowers are followed by blackish seed capsules that are 3-5mm long.

Why is it a problem?

Purple loosestrife is a highly aggressive invader of damp ground, wetlands and shallow water. It over-tops native species with its dense, bushy growth and is long-lived. It tolerates hot or cold conditions and low to high nutrient levels, though it is intolerant of salt water. Purple loosestrife reproduces mostly by seed but re-growth from plant fragments has also been observed. It produces millions of long-lived, highly viable seeds that can remain viable in the soil for many years. Seeds submerged in water can remain viable for 1-2 years. For germination, disturbed sites or open, moist substrates are preferred.

Control methods

Start control work at margins to prevent further seeding, and work downstream where possible.

Physical control

- Weedmat: kills whole patches. Start at top of infestation, leave 3-4 months.
- Lower water level if possible and mechanically remove.
- Raise water level if possible for 2-3 weeks to drown the weed.

Chemical control

- Spray: glyphosate (10ml/L). Respray until eliminated.
- Spray terrestrial sites: triclopyr 600 EC (30ml/10L) or triclopyr 120g/L (15ml/L). Follow up 3-monthly

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

[Request info](#)

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=PlantPests&Species=166>

[Report this Pest/Weed](#)

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityIncident/step/1?Subject=PlantPests&Species=166>

Notify Council

If you have seen or suspect the presence of Purple loosestrife you must report the sighting to Environment Southland immediately.

Management programme

- Eradication
- National Pest Plant Accord

Summary of rules

- No person can sell, propagate, breed, distribute or otherwise spread any Purple loosestrife. For full rules please see Sections 52 and 53 of the [Biosecurity Act 1993](#).
- If you detect or suspect the presence of Purple loosestrife within Southland you must immediately report its presence and location to Environment Southland. For full rules please see the [Southland Regional Pest Management Plan](#) (Rule 4).
- You can not possess, keep, hold, enclose or otherwise harbour Purple loosestrife within the Southland Region. For full rules please see the [Southland Regional Pest Management Plan](#) (Rule 5).

What is council doing about this?

If you suspect the presence of Purple loosestrife please contact Environment Southland immediately. Specialised control methods are required to manage this pest and will be carried out free of charge by a Biosecurity Officer or approved contractor.