

Lakeshore alert

Be Watchful, Report Sightings of Purple Loosestrife



Purple Loosestrife

Each mature plant can produce up to 2.7 million seeds annually.

The McKenzie Lakes Association is an active partner with Burnett County's Land and Water Conservation Department in controlling purple loosestrife (lythrum salicaria).

Purple loosestrife is an invasive plant that inhabits marshes and lakeshores, eradicating cattails and other desirable wetland plants. Purple loosestrife can form dense, impenetrable stands that are unsuitable as cover, food, or nesting sites for a wide range of native wetland animals including ducks, geese, rails, bitterns, muskrats, frogs, toads, and turtles.

Both Big and Middle McKenzie lakes have purple loosestrife infestations; to date there have been no reports of the plant on Lower McKenzie.

A combination of biological control and herbicides have been used to control purple loosestrife on both lakes. While biological control (beetles) is the preferred method of control, the use of herbicides has been used to treat specific areas where beetles have had difficulty establishing. Loon Island on Middle McKenzie is one example where herbicide spraying has occurred.

Identifying purple loosestrife

Purple loosestrife begins to flower in mid-July, is in full bloom by mid-August, and can be easily identified along lakeshores and roadside ditches. Look for the following characteristics.

- **Leaves** are downy, with smooth edges. They are usually arranged opposite each other in pairs which alternate down the stalk at 90 degree angles, however, they may appear in groups of three.
- **Stalks** are square, five or six-sided, woody, and with several stalks on mature plants. The plants can range in height from two to seven feet.
- **Flowers** have five or six pink-purple petals surrounding small, yellow centers. Each flower spike is made up of many individual flowers.

As flowers begin to drop off, capsules containing 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 may lay dormant for several years before sprouting.

Controlling purple loosestrife

The State of Wisconsin allows both herbicides (permit required) and/or biological control as methods for controlling purple loosestrife.

Herbicides - *Rodeo a glyphosate* is an approved herbicide for aquatic use and requires a permit to apply. Herbicide use requires caution when applying, so to avoid harming neighboring native plants. Applying herbicides when the PL is flowering (easiest to identify) may not prevent the plant from producing seeds. It is recommended to cut the flower head then spray with an approved herbicide to prevent or reduce seed formation. Flower heads should be place in a plastic bag and placed in a landfill.

Biological control - [*Galerucella pusilla* and *G. californiensis*](#) (*Cella* for short) are leaf-eating beetles which seriously affect growth and seed production by feeding on the leaves and new shoot growth of purple loosestrife plants. In 2016 more lakeshore owners will raise beetles, to be provided by Burnett County. The beetles will be used to treat problematic areas including the creek between Big and Middle McKenzie lakes.

All lakeshore owners should be on the lookout for purple loosestrife and contact either [Lisa Kiener](#) (Big McKenzie) or [Mike Schollmeyer](#) (Middle McKenzie) either to help identify the plant or establish a control plan if found on your lakeshore.