

# Why Eliminate LYTHRUM PLANTINGS ?



## Research at the University of Minnesota

(Ascher and Anderson) on the sterility of a number of commercially available purple loosestrife cultivars have found that most are, indeed, self-sterile. However, these same cultivars were found to be highly fertile when crossed with naturalized or "Wild" loosestrife plants. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that a few cultivars which are claimed to be self-sterile were, in fact, able to self-pollinate and produce viable seed. Research in Manitoba, Canada in 1993 has shown that garden varieties of Lythrum can pollinate with other varieties to produce viable seeds. Five collections made from landscape plantings in Lincoln in 1995 all produced viable seed. Plants do not have to be near each other to cross-pollinate. Honeybees which can travel miles are common loosestrife pollinators. For these reasons all domestic cultivars pose a threat as invasive Purple Loosestrife.

## Spread of Purple Loosestrife

Seed from ornamental plants are easily spread by water through storm sewers as well as other man-made and natural drainage systems. Purple loosestrife also is spread from ornamental plantings into aquatic areas by depositing lawn and/or garden clippings along creeks, drainage, or even in public landfills. The picture to the left shows plants spreading from landscape plantings in Lincoln, Nebraska. Clippings from these plantings may contain viable seed and/or plant parts from purple loosestrife. Wind, birds, insects, and small animals also are responsible for dispersing seed originating from ornamental loosestrife.

**Purple loosestrife became a noxious weed in Nebraska as of January 1, 2001. It is now illegal to sell or raise all purple loosestrife cultivars.**

**Plants with similar appearance include;**  
Ornamental purple loosestrife can be replaced with: Blazing Star (*Liatris spp.*), Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*), Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*), or Spike Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*).  
For additional alternative plantings contact the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service or your local licensed nursery grower or dealer.

## Eliminating Seed Production & Removal

To eliminate seed production, the flowering spikes can be clipped before flowers set seed in early August. The entire plant must be removed to minimize the chance for regrowth. Dig out the root mass, making sure that ALL pieces have been removed. Remember, the roots can extend 1 foot or deeper into the soil. Pulling may work if the soil is wet. Place ALL plant material in a carton so it can dry completely without danger of being spread by wind, water, human or animal activity. Once totally dried, it can be burned or bagged for disposal. When burning, make sure all plant matter is destroyed. When bagging, wrap securely in a dark plastic bag or container to avoid contamination at landfill sites. Purple loosestrife can re-root from pieces of root, stalk, seedhead or other vegetative tissue. For this reason, it is important to work carefully and be sure that no purple loosestrife plant material remains in the soil or is spread to other areas, especially water. All work should be completed by mid-summer BEFORE the flowers begin to go to seed. New shoots that come up from root remnants should be dealt with quickly. The site can be replanted to grass or other perennial flowers and should be re-inspected for regeneration.

Contact your County Weed Control Authority for assistance

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