

## What is it ?

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a **problematic weed** that is non-native to Maine. This perennial herbaceous plant spreads quickly in wetlands, destroying habitat and important food sources for **native fish and wildlife**. Purple loosestrife grows in dense stands and can crowd out valuable native plant species.

Introduced from Europe, it has been found in all but 3 counties in Maine. **Near Milford**, along Stud Mill and County Road this aggressive, invasive plant has become established in yards and along ditchbanks. The **Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge** are working to keep it from spreading to adjacent Refuge wetlands. You can help – see panel at right for tips.

## Identification

- ◆ Flowers 5 – 6 pink to purple petals arranged in a spike (see photo at right)
- ◆ Leaves grow in pairs on the stem and have margins that are entire, lacking serrations or teeth
- ◆ Stems are stout, square or 5-6 sided and up to six feet tall at maturity
- ◆ **Note:** Native fireweed, *Chamerion (Epilobium) angustifolium* also has pink flowers in spikes but grows in drier, disturbed sites, is shorter at maturity and has a rounded stem.



Kansas Dept. of Agriculture

## What can I do ?

1. Control small infestations by cutting or carefully uprooting in early July (double bag with heavy-duty plastic and dispose of in landfill). Make sure to minimize soil disturbance, reseed area with natives or appropriate grass seed and follow-up for several years!
2. Keep a look-out for this troublesome pest and report any infestations in backcountry areas
3. Volunteer to help with local control efforts or **contact us** for help in managing infestations

# Just the Facts

# on Purple loosestrife



Infests almost 400,000 acres a year in the US

One plant may produce up to 2.5 million seeds annually

Crop losses and control costs in the US are estimated to be \$45 million dollars a year

Destroys wildlife habitat and forage, chokes waterways and drainages

USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. Vol. 2: 581.

## Need help or want to get involved?

**Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge**



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## Purple Loosestrife

# A PURPLE PLAGUE



# What to do. And why...