

Purple Loosestrife

Lythrum salicaria

Description -

- Erect perennial herb with opposite or whorled sessile leaves with heart-shaped bases.
- Showy spikes of purple-magenta flowers during the summer months
- Grows four to eight feet tall and can have 30 to 50 stalks per root mass.
- Strong tap root, stems become woody, persisting for up to two years.

Distribution - Found in every state except Florida.

Threat - Quickly adapts to natural and disturbed wetlands; overtakes native aquatic plants and forms large dense stands. Displacement of native aquatic species impacts waterfowl dependent upon them for food and cover. A prolific seed producer; seeds that germinate in the spring will produce a flowering stem that year. Seeds remain viable for several years.

Control - Small infestations and young plants can be pulled by hand, preferably before seed sets in late summer, early fall. Plant parts should be bagged and removed from the site as any plant fragment that remains could resprout. Cutting and mowing increase vegetative spreading. Older plants can be treated by a foliar application with a glyphosate formulation for use over water. Biological control has also been pursued and used in some areas.

See <http://www.invasiveplants.net> for more information.

Similar Plants - Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*), and blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), although their preferred habitats are considerably drier. The native winged loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum*) most closely resembles purple loosestrife but has alternate leaves, more widely spaced flowers, and is smaller in size.

Origin - Introduced from Eurasia as an ornamental.

English Ivy

Hedera helix

Description -

- Evergreen climbing vine with dark green waxy, thick leaves with white veins. Can also form a dense ground cover.
- Leaf is commonly three-lobed with a heart-shaped base, though leaves in the sun can be oval with no lobes.
- Umbrella like clusters of greenish-white flowers are seen in fall and dark purple fruits mature in spring.

Distribution - Found in 26 states and the District of Columbia.

Threat - Creates dense undergrowth that shades out native species and inhibits tree regeneration. Also climbs trees, reducing vigor and possibly causing tree death. Also serves as an alternate host for Bacterial Leaf Scorch (*Xylella fastidiosa*), which in turn affects native elms, oaks and maples.

Control - Cutting vines on trees and pulling ground vines may be effective on small infestations. Pulled plants must be removed from the site or they will continue to grow unless desiccated. Repetition of treatment is usually necessary to be most effective. Use of triclopyr is suggested for large infestations. The waxy covering on the leaves limits absorption of chemicals, so repeat treatment may be needed for foliar applications. Cutting the stems with a string trimmer and then applying the herbicide can be effective.

Similar Plants - Possibly could be confused with grapes, *Vitis* spp., but leaves are not waxy or thick.

Origin - Found in Europe, Eastern Asia and Northern Africa. Introduced to the U.S. for use as a house plant and for landscaping.

Johnson Grass

Sorghum halapense

Description -

- Perennial grass, culms can grow 7-8 feet tall.
- Propagates through large rhizomes and mass seed production.
- Flowers are in a purple-colored panicle.
- Leaves are 6-20 inches long with a white mid-vein.
- Stems are pink to red near the base.

Distribution - Common in most of the U.S.

Threat - By the 20th century, Johnson grass was recognized as one of the six most damaging weeds in the U.S. Forms dense stands and has the capability of producing large numbers of seeds that remain viable in the soil for 25 years. Nutritional value as fodder is very low as compared to native species. Out competes native plants for water. May contain allelopathic properties, inhibiting the establishment of plants in its proximity. Readily sprouts from fragmented rhizomes.

Control - Mechanical cutting and use of Roundup as a foliar spray are acceptable when used repetitively. Hand-pulling is usually not effective because rhizomes are left behind, however this method, when repeated, may reduce vigor. If implemented, hand-pulling is best done in early spring. Heavy grazing reduces populations because rhizome development is greatly reduced when plant height is kept below 12 to 15 inches.

Similar Plants - Eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*), and Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), may possibly look similar to the casual observer.

Origin - Introduced from the Mediterranean region as a forage crop.

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