

# Purple loosestrife

*Lythrum salicaria*

Family Lythraceae



## Identification

- Upright, perennial species that can grow to 3 m high.
- Long purple/pink flower-spikes appear at the end of the stems from December to February.
- Leaves in pairs, opposite each other.
- The stems are usually square in cross-section.
- Leaves and stems die right back in winter to re-emerge in spring.



Purple loosestrife. Photo: N. Proctor



Purple loosestrife growing amongst raupo. A. Paltridge (DOC)

## Where is it found?

Purple loosestrife thrives in damp places, particularly wetlands, garden ponds or along river/lake margins. It can also be found growing in gardens. Purple loosestrife has been found growing in the Canterbury region.

## Why is it a problem?

Purple loosestrife grows quickly to form dense stands which block out other plants. It also has the potential to clog waterways and impede drainage. Purple loosestrife produces large numbers of seeds that are easily spread by water, wind, birds and carried on machinery to places further afield. It can also be spread by fragments, particularly of the root system; these can re-sprout when in contact with the ground to form a new plant.

## Status

Purple loosestrife has been declared an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993, which makes it illegal to knowingly release or spread, display or sell, breed, propagate or otherwise distribute this species.

## Control

Local agencies are working together to eradicate purple loosestrife from the Canterbury region.

To report sightings of purple loosestrife, please contact (03) 341 9111.



Purple loosestrife growing along the Avon River. Photo: A. Paltridge (DOC)