



Control Options for Purple Loosestrife

General information

Purple loosestrife poses a serious threat to wetland and aquatic habitat. The plant has a densely matted perennial root system making its removal difficult. A mature plant can produce nearly 3 million tiny seeds which travel very well on wind and water currents. It offers little to wildlife and waterfowl as a source of food or shelter, and it can outcompete the native plants needed for ecosystem function. Loosestrife populations in Whatcom County are widely scattered, with the largest populations found in the South Bellingham/Fairhaven area.

Manual/Mechanical Techniques

Small infestations of purple loosestrife can be somewhat controlled through hand digging. Since purple loosestrife spreads by root, it is important to remove as much root as possible, while realizing that some roots will be missed and plants will regenerate from these fragments. All root fragments which are removed from the soil should be sealed in plastic and treated as garbage. If root fragments are released into the water, they will survive to start plants elsewhere. Mowing does not kill the plants and may spread fragments which could also grow new plants elsewhere. If purple loosestrife is flowering or seeding, the flower heads and seeds should be sealed in plastic garbage bags and disposed as garbage. Cutting plants late in the season just before seed set can reduce shoot growth in the following season but does not kill the plants. Do not compost buds, flowers or root fragments.



Chemical Recommendations

Purple loosestrife can be controlled using specific herbicides. Purple loosestrife should be sprayed in the summer, when the plants are flowering. When using herbicides, always read and follow label directions for rates, spraying conditions, personal protective equipment and grazing intervals. If spraying is the chosen option, spray late in the evening to reduce the direct impact on pollinating insects. Do not spray when it is windy or raining, or when rain is forecast. Do not mow sprayed plants for at least 2 weeks after herbicide application. Herbicides should not be sprayed within 60 feet of water bodies and creeks, without further consultation with the Noxious Weed Board. Remember, it is the herbicide applicators responsibility to apply the product in accordance to the instructions on the label.

Herbicides containing *Glyphosate* (Round Up® and many other brand names) can be used in treating individual plants at a 1-2% rate. Spray plants until they are just wet. Avoid spraying desired vegetation, as this herbicide can damage both broad-leaf plants and grasses.

NEVER apply RoundUp® or other herbicides to standing water unless they are distinctly labeled for aquatic use. Ingredients in non-aquatic products may be toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms. Aquatic formulations of herbicides are generally only available to licensed pesticide applicators in Washington State. If the target plants are immediately adjacent to or are in standing water, a state permit may also be required in order to treat those plants with an aquatically approved herbicide.

- **Always read and understand the label of the herbicides you choose to use.**
- **More is NOT better when using herbicides, and may actually hinder the ability of the herbicide to injure the target plant if the solution is too strong. This wastes money and effort and puts more product into the environment than is necessary. ALWAYS follow the recommended rates on the label.**
- **With all herbicides, when you apply them is as important as how you apply them.**

The mention of a specific product brand name in this document is not, and should not be construed as an endorsement or as a recommendation for the use of that product. Herbicide information is taken from the WSU Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook and the King County Noxious Weed Program (Seattle, WA).