

media release

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August 7, 2013

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NOXIOUS WEED ALERT: ***Purple Loosestrife***

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – The Colorado Department of Agriculture works to stop the spread of noxious weeds across the state through a coordinated effort to detect and eradicate new invaders as well as manage well-established species. Currently, there are 74 species of plants in the state that are designated "noxious," meaning they pose a threat to the state's agricultural productivity, wildlife habitat and native plant communities.

This month, we feature a noxious weed that can grow up to eight feet tall: *purple loosestrife*.



FACT SHEET & MAP: www.colorado.gov/ag/purpleloosestrife

LOCATION: Purple loosestrife can be found along riverbanks, ditches, and wet meadows in several parts of the state. It appears in the Denver metro area, mostly along the banks of the South Platte River and its tributaries, but after 20 years of hard work by many agencies, groups and individuals, it is in steep decline. Still, it is found down the South Platte River in spots all the way to Nebraska, and is also found in El Paso, Jefferson, Douglas, Arapahoe, Mesa and Montrose counties.

TREATMENT: A single, mature plant can produce up to three million seeds per year. The seeds can remain viable in the soil for 5 to 20 years. Purple loosestrife produces many four-sided stems that can grow two to eight feet tall. Hand removal of isolated individuals can be effective on small infestations. Hand removal should be performed prior to seed set. It is important to remove the entire rootstalk of the plant to avoid regrowth from root fragments. For larger infestations, the preferred method is to clip and bag the seed heads, then spray the foliage of the plant with an herbicide approved for use in aquatic areas. The CDA fact sheet has more information about chemical treatments. Always read, understand and follow the label directions.

BACKGROUND: Purple loosestrife is native to Europe and was introduced to North America as an ornamental plant for gardens. It has escaped into natural areas such as stream banks and shallow ponds.

Infestations rapidly replace native vegetation, can impede water flow in canals and ditches, and have little wildlife habitat value. Infested wetlands can eventually become a monoculture of loosestrife.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: If you see this plant, please contact your county weed management program or CDA. County weed programs are a tremendous resource for treatment information and management of specific weeds in specific counties. Find your county contact at www.colorado.gov/ag/coweedcontacts. You can also email CDA at Steve.Ryder@state.co.us.

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