

Invasive of the Week Watch: Purple Loosestrife

By: Tanner Ruechel

Imagine a field, pasture, or wetland about this time of year filled with gorgeous purple flowers as far as the eye can see. This image may seem appealing to many, but my mother once told me to be cautious of too much of a good thing. And in the case of Purple Loosestrife, my mom's advice finally seems to have some implication. Purple Loosestrife can already been seen around the town of La Valle, Reedsburg, and Dutch Hollow Lake. Please DO NOT PICK this flower, as you may unwillingly cause it to spread.

The few local patches of loosestrife may not seem overwhelming now, but one mature plant can produce over 2 million seeds annually, allowing vast spread in a short period of time. Once a population establishes dominance it will shade out numerous native competitors by growing nearly 9 feet in height, covering Lake Redstone shorelines. Many of these natives are endangered and are the reason countless tax dollars are spent to preserve wetlands. With nearly all native plants pushed out, many native wetland animals will be without food and shelter such as butterflies and birds. Large populations of loosestrife can cause wetlands to store and filter less water, which can also lower the water clarity in Lake Redstone.



The easiest way to identify Purple Loosestrife is by the sheer mass of a population. However, there are many native 'look-a-likes' to be confused with. Be sure to educate yourself and ask an expert if you think you have an invasive on your property.

If you would like to help save area wetlands while stopping the spread of Purple Loosestrife and other invasive species from finding their way to the shores of Lake Redstone and Dutch Hollow Lake, please offer to volunteer a few hours any day this summer with Clean Boats Clean Waters by contacting Tanner Ruechel through email ruechelt@gmail.com or phone (920) 621-3282.