

Weed Awareness

Purple Loosestrife Exchange Program

Purple Loosestrife is a tall, woody perennial that invades wetlands. It contributes to habitat loss by out competing native vegetation. Purple Loosestrife is a noxious weed under the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act.

Garden varieties, sometimes called Lythrum, cross pollinate with escaped plants to produce viable seeds and may even produce seeds themselves. These seeds can spread to neighboring wetlands.



Purple Loosestrife includes garden varieties sometimes called Lythrum.

A Nebraska-Wide Purple Loosestrife Exchange program was developed in cooperation with nurseries and garden centers last year. Many landowners participated in this program. The 2002 season is the last opportunity for growers of ornamental Purple Loosestrife to receive the discount offered by this program.

How the Plant Exchange Works

The goal of the Purple Loosestrife Exchange program is to get Purple Loosestrife and ornamental Lythrum out of flower gardens and reduce the potential for further spread.

This program gives landowners an opportunity to replace their Purple Loosestrife plant with a discounted perennial. The discount is 25 percent off towards a perennial for each Lythrum plant that is removed (up to the number allowed by the nursery or garden center).

To receive the discount, landowners either:

- Contact Lancaster County Weed Control Authority office at 441-7817 for verification of removal and receive a discount coupon to take to a participating nursery or garden center.
- Bring any Lythrum variety, roots and all, to a participating nursery or garden center with a drop-off site (see list below).

Disposal of Purple Loosestrife

Never compost Purple Loosestrife or Lythrum. To prevent further spread from the plants once they are dug up, we suggest landowners either:

- Double bag the plants in black garbage bags (never use clear bags) and put the bags in the garbage for pickup and burial in a landfill.
- Take the bags to a participating nursery or garden center with a drop-off site.

Participating Nurseries and Garden Centers

Lancaster County participating nurseries and garden centers which offer perennial discounts and have drop-off sites for Purple Loosestrife or Lythrum are:

- Campbell's Nurseries, 7000 S 56, Lincoln
- Campbell's Nurseries, 2342 S 40, Lincoln
- Earl May Nursery, 5555 S 48, Lincoln
- Earl May Nursery, 71 & O, Lincoln
- Seeds of Life, 12400 Holdrege, Lincoln
- Williams Nursery, 1742 N 48 Street, Lincoln

The current listing of Nebraska-wide nurseries and garden centers that participate in the Purple Loosestrife Exchange Program can be found at www.neweed.org.

Why Certain Weeds Are Considered “Noxious”

Often pleasing to the eye, noxious weeds such as Purple Loosestrife can invade native wildlife habitat and agricultural lands, choking out desirable vegetation.

Many of Nebraska's worst weeds are not native — their origins can be traced back to Europe and Asia. Unfortunately, they flourish here in North America without the natural insects, animals, fungi and diseases that keep them under control in their homeland.

Weeds can hitch-a-ride onto your property, travelling via equipment, vehicles, hay, birds

and other wildlife—even on your clothing. If soil is disturbed or cultivated, woodlands and shrubs removed or grasses overgrazed and in poor health, conditions are perfect for weeds to thrive and take over. Left unchecked and unmanaged, the problem will only get worse.

For example, leafy spurge has spread so rapidly in North Dakota and Montana; it has caused severe productivity declines on literally millions of acres of rangeland.

Armed with some basic management practices and control techniques, these beautiful

invaders can be controlled or even eradicated.

Though you may have resolved that you really don't mind your property awash in a purple-blossomed sea of Canada Thistle, your neighbor probably won't like all the seeds drifting into his field crops or pasture. No weed stays within the fence lines.

As a landowner, it is your responsibility under the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act to control or destroy noxious weeds. Team up with neighbors and help each other control weeds in your area.

Livestock Grazing and Weed Prevention on Acreages and Pastures

A fairly common oversight on small farms and acreages is underestimating the forage needs of livestock and overestimating the productive capacity of grazing land. To maintain healthy livestock and forage production, you will need to develop a sustainable forage and feed plan.

This involves calculating the forage your animals consume, the forage and hay production on your land and the feed (hay) requirements per animal. These calculations will reveal if you can meet your animal's needs on your land.

In lieu of this, you can maintain a plentiful supply of hay and feed your livestock in a corral until the pasture gets tall enough to graze. Begin grazing when grass is 12 inches tall and remove livestock when the grass is eaten down to six inch height. Wait until the pasture regrows to 12 inches before grazing again.

Signs of Poor Grazing Management

Your grazing management system needs adjusting if your animals are:

- chewing on trees, shrubs, fences or barns
- losing weight or overweight
- consuming dirt while trying to graze

Poor pasture conditions may lead to increased parasite problems, reduced body condition and overall poor health of your livestock and increased weed problems.



Weeds can easily begin to grow in pastures where overgrazing has damaged the grasses.



Good grazing management = livestock health and weed prevention

Tips to Avoid Overgrazing

To avoid overgrazing your pastures each year, you may need to:

- Buy additional feed or rent pasture.
- Take steps to increase your forage production by fertilization and rotation grazing system.
- Reduce the number of animals.
- Seek assistance.

Tips for Successful Grazing Management

- Depending on the size of acreage, develop a pasture-rotation

grazing system. Eliminate continuous, season-long grazing.

- On a limited acreage, you may have only enough pasture to exercise your animals and will need to supply feed year-round.
- Pasture rotation, good grazing management and fertilization produces more grass, fewer weeds and healthier animals.
- Corral livestock and feed them hay until your pasture grasses are at least 12 inches high. Move

animals to another pasture when 50 percent of the grass plant remains. Do not re-graze until grasses are at least 12 inches high again.

Horse Grazing Tips

Horses do not need 24-hour access to feed and forage. The daily nutritional needs of an idle, mature horse can be met with as little as three to four hours of grazing on good pasture. Corral animals for the rest of the day to prevent overgrazing and help extend the forage available in your pastures. Horses are “spot” grazers, so pasture rotations with other livestock or regular mowing may help improve grass production.



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