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## Yellow Loosestrife: ID, habitat, and management

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### Taxonomy

Yellow loosestrife (YLS) is known as *Lysimachia terrestris*. It is recognized as part of the Loosestrife family (Lythraceae) by some sources and part of the Primrose Family (Primulaceae) by others. YLS also goes by a variety of common names including swamp-loosestrife, swamp candles, and bulb-bearing loosestrife (Magee, 1981; Dwelley, 1973).



### Identification

Yellow loosestrife can grow up to 3 feet tall and can be recognized by its narrow pointed leaves and yellow flowers (Magee, 1981).

Leaves: Yellow loosestrife leaves can grow to 4 inches long and less than one inch wide. Leaves are pointed at both ends and decrease in size towards the base and tip of the stem. They are numerous, opposite, and are attached directly by its base. Middle and upper leaves have purple bulblets that develop axils late in the season (Magee, 1981). When they are vegetative, these bulblets are a reddish color (Levine, 1995).



*Yellow loosestrife flowers*

Flowers: The flowers are about  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches across and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide with five sepals and five petals. Yellow loosestrife flowers are yellow and streaked with dark lines. The center of the flowers appear darker due to the presence of a ring of red or purple dots at the base of the petals. Flowers are arranged in thin 10-inch long spikes at the tip of the stem. The spikes are loose and upright. Flowering occurs in late July to early August (Magee, 1981; Dwelley, 1973).

Stem: Yellow loosestrife is a hairless plant so the stem is smooth. Stems arise from rhizomes that allow

for vegetative reproduction to be the main form of reproduction for yellow loosestrife (Magee, 1981).

Fruit: The fruit is enclosed in a brown spherical capsule. These capsules are about ¼ inch long with five partitions (Magee, 1981). Each fruit contains several small seeds, however, starting from seeds is difficult in yellow loosestrife plants. Instead, bulblets and rhizome sections can be planted to get new plants (Bebeaux, 2016).



*From USDA-NRCS PLANTS database.  
Created by N.L. Britton and A. Brown*



*Yellow loosestrife bulblets*

## **Habitat**

Yellow loosestrife can be found throughout most of the east coast of the United States from New England to Georgia. It can also be found in Kentucky, Arkansas, Iowa, and Minnesota. In Canada, it is found in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Manitoba. It prefers marshes, bogs, swamps, and other wet areas where it grows in small to large colonies. Rhizomes allow YLS to spread quickly throughout these areas. (Magee, 1981; Thieret et al., 2001).

## **Management**

In MA cranberry production, YLS is classified as a very high priority because it is difficult to control and serves as an early- and late-season host for dodder, another very high priority weed. There is little evidence of yield loss from increased yellow loosestrife stem density, but dodder can impact yield and is very difficult to manage. Additionally, the tips of YLS can harbor *Sparganothis* larvae.

Yellow loosestrife should be managed before it has the chance to spread and before plants get too big. The preemergence herbicide dichlobenil can be used for some control of loosestrife if applied in fall or spring. Preliminary results from greenhouse studies in MA indicate that quinclorac and sulfentrazone may also be effective when applied preemergence. In New Jersey, postemergence applications of quinclorac applied in mid-July has been found to control yellow loosestrife in the year after application (Besançon, pers. comm). Spot treatments with glyphosate or 2,4-D can be used for postemergence control as well (Sandler and Ghantous, 2021).

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**Phoebe Antonio, Katherine Ghantous, and Hilary Sandler, December 2021**

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