

## Lythraceae

### loosestrife family

Twenty-five genera with nearly 500 species comprise this family, but only two genera reach Nova Scotia. Typically flowers are perfect, regular and 4–8-merous. Petals are epigynous or inserted. Stamens number at least as many as the petals or double. They are inserted into the hypanthium, which bears but a single style. Leaves are simple and with entire margins, usually whorled, less frequently alternate.

#### Key to genera

Hypanthium equal in length and breadth; flowers 4–5 merous; native wetland or emergent plant. *Decodon*

Hypanthium much longer than broad; calyx and corolla 6-merous; introduced, invasive plants. *Lythrum*

### ***Decodon* JF Gmelin**

#### **water-willow**

A monotypic genus of North America, the species is a perennial with slender emergent stems, fibrous at the submerged base. Sometimes plants are found rooting from the tip. The leaves are opposite or whorled and the flowers arranged in dense terminal cymes, from the upper leaf axils.

***Decodon verticillatus* (L.) Ell.**  
**(incl. var. *laevigatus* Torr. And Gray.**  
**Water-willow; décodon verticillé**



Photo by Sean Blaney

An herb with smooth stems that become spongy at the base. Leaves are opposite and narrowly lanceolate on short petioles. Beautiful fall colours of red and violet mark this species, a striking sight when the colony is large. Flower clusters are distant.

Flowers during July and August.

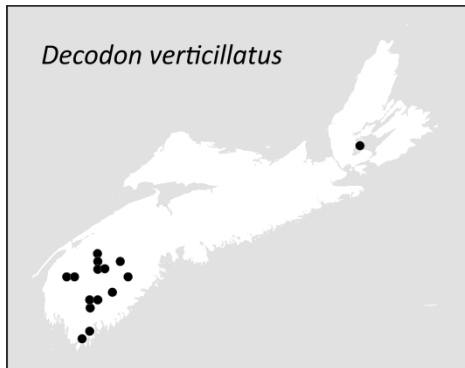


Photo by David Mazerolle

Sphagnum margins of ponds or lakes.

Rare: Shelburne County and Digby County; Kejimikujik National Park.

Ranges from NS to ON, south to TX and FL.



*Decodon verticillatus*

## ***Lythrum* L.** **loosestrife**

Cosmopolitan in distribution, the loosestrifes comprise about 30 species. A single troublesome ornamental is naturalized throughout Nova Scotia. Worldwide, they are shrubs or herbs; their leaves are opposite or whorled. Flowers are axillary or in terminal cymes. Flowers are six-merous, white to purple. Stamens or styles may be dimorphic or even trimorphic. Fruit is an enclosed capsule.

***Lythrum salicaria* L.**

**Purple Loosestrife; salicaire commune**



*Photo by Sean Blaney*

A tall perennial, plants are sparsely villous. Leaves are sessile and cordate at the base, reducing in size towards the apex of the plant. Flowers are borne in the axils of the reduced leaves forming a showy terminal inflorescence of magenta flowers.

Flowers throughout the summer.

Low ground of ditches, meadows, fields, wetlands, highway verges. Opportunistic in wetlands of modified hydrology, ie. drained and ditched and therefore indicates disturbance. It has not invaded any meaningful native and undisturbed wetlands.



*Photo by Sean Blaney*

Throughout the province and actively spreading. Control measures are being studied.

Spread across North America with the exception of GA, FL, LA and AZ.

Of concern and banned as a noxious weed in many jurisdictions.

A small population of ***Lythrum hyssopifolia*** (Hyssop Loosestrife) was recently discovered growing in a shallow puddle in Port Williams, Kings Co. It is not known if this plant still persists at this location.