



## State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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### **\* THE WDNR/UWEX CITIZEN PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE BIOCONTROL PROGRAM\***

TO: Potential Citizen Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Cooperators  
FROM: Brock Woods, WDNR / UW Extension Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Coordinator

#### **ALERT: Acquire biocontrol beetles for your loosestrife-infested wetlands in May or July!**

**Thank you for your interest in the biological control (BC) of purple loosestrife (PL)!** Our BC program helps citizens use two safe beetle species (that live only on PL), in combination with traditional control methods, to reduce the both the plant's height and flowering, allowing native plants to compete successfully. You can now acquire these beetles for your local wetlands by rearing a small number of starter beetles available from WDNR in spring into 100 times as many for mid summer release. You may also be able to collect (or buy from private vendors) beetles for immediate release in May. The millions of beetles raised and released by state citizens so far are reducing PL in many wetlands. Yours should be included! Releasing beetles will not only help control the plant in your area, it will also help spread control to other areas since the beetles can fly up to 10 miles. **Success in this endeavor depends on YOU, your friends, and neighbors!**

**Please read the following items for a better understanding of the PL problem and its solutions.** Most items are available on the Internet and at many WDNR and UW Extension offices. Start with the WDNR/UWEX Purple Loosestrife Brochure: in color, WDNR publication # PUB-WT-799 2004 at <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/purple.pdf>, and in black/purple, PUB-WT-829 2006. Specific BC information is in the appendices of "See Cella Chow!--A Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Manual for Educators," which you can download in its entirety or in parts at [http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/publications/ss981\\_2003.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/publications/ss981_2003.htm) (PUB-SS-981 2003). For example, Appendix 6 adds details about choosing the best control methods for your field site(s) and Appendix 2 has very detailed rearing information. Much additional information about PL, its BC, and other invasive species is also on the WDNR web site, both here: <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/loosestrife.htm> and on the WDNR website given below. For further guidance, please contact me, your county's AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) Coordinator (typically at land and water conservation dept's or UWEX), or your regional DNR office.

**Most cooperators initiate biocontrol by rearing and releasing large numbers of beetles,** the best way to ensure successful beetle establishment. WDNR supplies the know-how for this, as well as starter beetles and most needed supplies for **free** in Madison if you rear beetles two+ years. You use your garden tools (see Appendix 3), supply local PL roots and potting soil, put the rearing project together at your location, and release your raised beetles where you need them. Rearing is easy and cheap (usually much less than \$30 for several infested sites), though it requires a little gardening work. Space needed is small (4' X 4' of sunny area in your backyard), and the hours of labor required are few. (The free beetle starter population for rearing can also be mailed to you anywhere in Wisconsin for a program donation of \$20 to cover over-night shipping; now **free** for teachers!)

**You may also be able to simply collect beetles in the field yourself for immediate release, or buy ready-to-release beetles.** If a local insectary site has been established near where you live, you may be able to collect your own free beetles in May—either for release or rearing. (Please contact me about local insectary sites, and especially for possible school field trips.) If you want beetles, but cannot take advantage of the Program to rear or collect what you need, you can get them from a couple private beetle sellers (call me for details). No special permit is needed if beetles are purchased in-state for release, though we do ask you to send us an Insect Release Field Report (see below) so we know when and where you have put your beetles.

**Rearing is easy.** Decide how many plants you wish to work with (from 2 to 10 or more), send in a signed "Application/Authorization Form" (Appendix 4, though in revision for 2012), and sew sleeve cages from the **free** netting mailed to you. As soon as your local wetland thaws in spring, transplant big, healthy PL rootstocks into **free** pots. Add your potting soil, immediately place the cages on the young plants, and place all the pots into a **free** kid wading pool (or similar container). Maintain water in the pools to re-create a backyard wetland habitat (that often attracts butterflies, frogs, and other neat critters), and in May when plants are 2+ feet tall, put ten **free** starter beetles into each of the cages. When new adult beetles start appearing in June or July, simply move the potted plants to local, PL-infested wetlands and remove the cages so beetles can disperse. That's all there is to rearing your own! Plus, if you pick a good local spot for first beetle releases, you can develop your own local insectary site for collecting more beetles for future rearing or release! (If you need information about local PL sites for roots or releases check the map at [www.glifwc.org](http://www.glifwc.org) or contact me.) (Rearing details are in Appendix 2.)

**After your releases**, report them to us by mail or on line with an easy-to-fill-in Insect **Release Field Report form** (at <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/loosestrife/>; send to address on the form). Typically, you'll see your wetlands change in a few seasons as PL blooming declines, so you'll want to photograph your sites annually at bloom time to clearly see these changes by comparing years. We'll also explain how to easily monitor your beetles. Last, you'll want to use another easy **Site Revisit form** (same web site; send to address on the form.) to share the story of your site's changes due to your hard work.

**Try to team up with others to share in the work, costs, fun, and learning.** Consider friends, or organizations such as Lake Districts, schools or conservation groups. This can be a **great school project**, but since it typically runs from April to July, teachers often conclude it using summer school, or by working with a non-school tag team partner who can finish it. (Rearing earlier, indoors, and entirely within the school year, is possible, as well; please contact me.) The first half of "See Cella Chow!" also includes 15 curricular activities centered on PL and BC, especially helpful for using the project in the classroom or other educational venues!

**To reserve your beetles from WDNR and get authorization to grow PL for beetle production**, you must return a signed Authorization form (Appendix 4) to me the **address below** (The earlier, the better; 100 beetles (for 10 plants) is typical, but starting with fewer or more is okay. If you want beetles delivered by mail include your donation check to 'Wisconsin DNR' for \$20, noting that it's for 'Purple Loosestrife'. (If you end up picking up your beetle stock in Madison or collecting your own, you can get your donation back.) To legally cultivate PL plants to rear beetles, you must return the Authorization form (and Release form) whether or not you get beetles from DNR. **Send this form only to the address below (regardless of any other addresses found on some older forms).**

**If you cannot rear or release beetles**, the state PL Brochure (see above) lists many other ways you can help! One great way is to report new purple loosestrife sites on our **NEW Wetland and Riparian Surveillance Monitoring form**, also at <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/loosestrife/> (send to address on the form). Also, please share information about PL and this program with interested others--especially educators and organizations! (Feel free to email this letter to anyone else you think interested.) If you have a group that might be interested in helping, and need a local **PL biocontrol presentation**, please contact me!

**We hope you can join us** in controlling PL--and other exotics--in Wisconsin. This will require more fascinating intimacy with your local environment than ever before and WDNR and UWEX will do everything possible to guide and support you in the fun and work. If you have any questions or comments about the program, please contact me at **Purple Loosestrife Project, DNR Science Operations Center, 2801 Progress Road, Madison, WI 53716**, at [brock.woods@wisconsin.gov](mailto:brock.woods@wisconsin.gov), or call **608/221-6349**. Sign up soon for your beetle rearing next spring! I look forward to hearing from and working with you.

Your wetlands will thank you for your work for a long time to come!