



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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

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

Thank you for your interest in the biological control (BC) of purple loosestrife (PL)! Our BC program uses two safe beetle species (that live only on PL) to reduce the plant's height and flowering, and allow native plants to out-compete it. You can now acquire enough 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 beetles (or buy them from private vendors) for immediate release in May. Millions of beetles raised and released by state citizens so far are reducing PL in many wetlands. Yours should be included! Releasing beetles may not only help control PL in your wetland, but spread control to other areas since the beetles can fly to find other PL plants up to 10 miles away. **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. All are available on the Internet, and many may be at your local WDNR and UW Extension offices. Start with the state Purple Loosestrife Brochure: WDNR publication # PUB-WI-799 2007, at <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/purple.pdf>. Specific BC information is in Appendices 1, 2, 3, 6 & 7 of "See Cella Chow!--A Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Manual for Educators," which you can download at <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ss/SS0981.pdf>. (Do not use any forms from this manual; new forms are at the biocontrol website given below.) 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. Additional information about PL and its BC is also on the WDNR web site at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/fact/PurpleLoosestrife.html>. For further guidance, please contact me or your county's Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator (if there isn't one, try your county Land and Water Conservation Department, UWEX agent, or regional DNR office).

Most cooperators initiate biocontrol by rearing and releasing large numbers of beetles, the best way to insure successful beetle establishment. WDNR supplies the know-how for this (Appendix 2), as well as starter beetles and most needed supplies for **free** in Madison if you rear beetles at least two years. You use your garden tools, 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). Space needed is small (4' X 4' of sunny area outdoors or in a greenhouse), 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 school teachers!)

You may also be able to simply collect beetles in the field yourself for rearing or release, or buy ready-to-release beetles. If a local insectary site has been established near where you live, you can sometimes find & collect your own free beetles in May for use elsewhere. Please contact me about local insectary sites, and possible school collecting trips, if interested. If you cannot take advantage of this rearing program or collect what you need, you might 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) and send in a signed "Authorization/Application form" (at <http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/forms/loosestrife-cultivation.pdf> & on the Biocontrol

Program web site given below). Sew sleeve cages from the **free** netting mailed to you, and as soon as your local wetland thaws in spring, transplant, healthy PL rootstocks into **free** pots with a little potting soil. Immediately place the cages on the young plants. Keep these pots in a **free** kid wading pool (or similar container) to make watering easy (it's a backyard wetland habitat that often attracts butterflies, frogs, and other neat critters). 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 or contact me.)

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/lakes/forms/InsectRelease.pdf>). 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 over the years. We can also explain how to easily monitor your beetles, and you'll want to use our easy **Site Revisit form** (<http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/forms/SiteRevisit.pdf>) to share the story of your site's changes due to your hard work. Both of these forms are also on the DNR Biocontrol Program web site given below.

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 it typically runs from April to July or August, so teachers often conclude it using a summer school class, 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 "Biocontrol Manual for Educators," mentioned above, 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 your signed Authorization/Application form to me at the **address below**. Starting with 100 beetles for 10 plants is typical, though starting with fewer or more is okay, based on number of plants potted. 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 not needing beetle stock from DNR, or pick it up in Madison, you may get your donation back.) To legally cultivate PL plants to rear beetles, you must return the Authorization/Application and Release forms. **Send this form to the address below (do not use any other addresses found in older publications).**

If you cannot rear or release beetles, the state PL Brochure (see above) lists many other ways you can help! For example, report new purple loosestrife sites with a wetland form at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/report.html>. You can also share information about PL and this program with interested others--especially with any educators or local organizations you think might be interested in rearing beetles! If you, or any group you think might be interested, need a local PL biocontrol presentation to decide, please contact me!

We hope you can join us in controlling PL in Wisconsin. This will require more fascinating intimacy with your local wetlands than ever before (especially if you need to fill the void from reduced PL with native plants—the ultimate step in pushing PL out of any wetland)! WDNR/UWEX will do everything possible to guide and support you in the fun and work. If you have any questions about the program, see the **PL Biocontrol Program web site** at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/loosestrife.html>, or contact me at **WDNR, 101 S. Webster St., Madison, WI 53707-7921**, at brock.woods@wisconsin.gov, or by **calling 608/266-2554**. Sign up soon for your beetle rearing in spring! I look forward to hearing from and working with you.

Wetlands you save from invasive species will thank you for a long time to come!

Brock Woods,
Wisconsin Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol & Wetland Invasive Plant Programs