

## CURTISS' LOOSESTRIFE

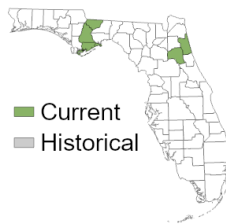
*Lythrum curtissii* Fern.

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Lythraceae (loosestrife)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2/S2

**Legal Status:** US-none; FL-Endangered



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**Field Description:** Slender **herb** rising from a woody base, with one to several erect, much-branched **stems**. **Upper branches** four-sided or slightly winged. **Leaves** small and widely-spaced with very short or no **leafstalks**; leaves on upper branches usually alternate, those on lower stems opposite and larger, up to 4.1 cm long, usually shed by flowering time. **Flowers** in angles of upper leaves, slightly asymmetrical, with 6 bright rose-purple **petals** emerging from a green and purple-ribbed tube formed by 6 tiny, pointed **sepals**; sepals alternate with 6 tiny appendages that are the same size as the sepals. **Fruits** small, cylindrical, reddish-brown.

**Similar Species:** Winged loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum* var. *lanceolatum*) also occurs in freshwater wetlands in the FL Panhandle and flowers in the summer but its leaves are crowded and overlapping in the upper branches and the sepal appendages are twice as long as the adjacent sepals. Wand loosestrife (*Lythrum lineare*) occurs only in brackish and tidal habitats.

**Related Rare Species:** Tropical waxweed (*Cuphea aspera*), state-endangered, occurs in open wet flatwoods and prairies in the Central FL Panhandle. Flowers are opposite or whorled at upper nodes, with 6 pink-purple, unequal petals. Sepals form a purple, ribbed floral tube with a pouched base. Upper stems, flower stalks, and floral tubes are covered in purple glandular hairs, making the plant waxy or sticky to the touch.

**Habitat:** Clearings in wet flatwoods; dome swamp edges; sunny patches in stream thickets and floodplain forests, as well as in roadside ditches.

**Best Survey Season:** Flowers in summer; June - early September.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Central FL Panhandle and SW GA.

**Conservation Status:** This species has a low number of occurrences with a minority occurring in high quality natural habitats (streamsides, floodplains, marsh edges). Curtiss' loosestrife is very sensitive to canopy closure and changes in drainage. Habitat outside of protected areas may be subject to alteration by logging, drainage alteration, mechanical disturbance, herbicide use, and fire suppression.

**Protection and Management:** Avoid drainage and mechanical disturbance in wetlands. Burn every 2 - 3 years to maintain open canopy; allow fires to burn into streamside thickets and edges of floodplains. Avoid herbicide use in road and utility rights-of-way.

**References:** Clewell 1985, Coile 2000, Godfrey and Wooten 1981, Graham 1964, Graham 1975, Kral 1983, Patrick et al. 1995, Tobe et al. 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018.

