

Lythrum spp.

loosestrife

Introduction

The genus *Lythrum* has a worldwide distribution. It is comprised of 35 species; four are reported to occur in China^[92].

Species of *Lythrum* in China

Scientific Name
<i>Lythrum anceps</i> (Koehne) Mak.
<i>Lythrum intermedium</i> Ledeb.
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> L.
<i>Lythrum virgatum</i> L.



Flowers of *Lythrum salicaria*. (Photo by Norman E. Rees, USDA-ARS.)

I. *Lythrum salicaria* Purple loosestrife

Taxonomy

Family: Lythraceae
Genus: *Lythrum* L.

Description

Lythrum salicaria is a perennial with creeping rhizomes. Stems are erect, nearly square, 30-100 cm tall, and coated by downy pubescence. Growing in opposite arrangement or in whorls of three, the sessile leaves



Lythrum salicaria growth habit. (Photo by Randy Westbrook, USGS.)

are lanceolate or broadly lanceolate, 4-6 cm long and 8-15 mm wide, entire-edged, acuminate apically, and orbicular, cordate, or clasping at the bases. The sessile, six-petaled magenta flowers form dense, compound, terminal, interrupted spikes. The hairy calyx is tubular, 4-6 mm long, six-lobed, with twelve thin vertical ridges on the outer surface. Fruits are oblate capsules appearing July through September.^{[74][92]}

Habitat

L. salicaria occurs along river banks, lakes, ditches, and moist grasslands^[92].

Distribution

L. salicaria has a nationwide distribution in China^[92] except for Hainan, Qinghai,

Taiwan, Tibet, and Yunnan.

Economic Importance

Purple loosestrife grows near rivers and may be planted as an ornamental. Medically, it has a variety of uses^[92].

II. *Lythrum virgatum*

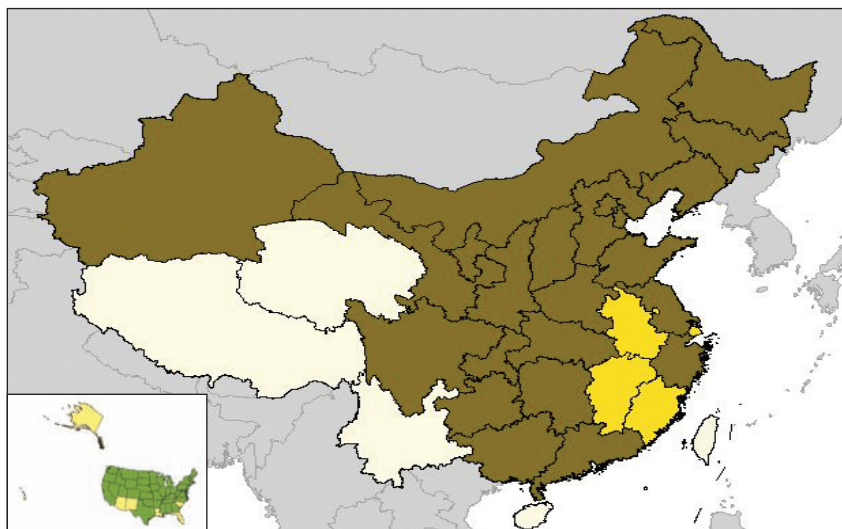
European wand loosestrife

Taxonomy

Family: Lythraceae
Genus: *Lythrum* L.

Description

Lythrum virgatum, is a perennial subshrub that can reach 50 to 100 cm in height. It



can be distinguished from *L. salicaria* by the glabrous stem, cuneate leaf base, and denticulate leaf margin. Leaves are opposite, but sometimes alternate on the upper part of the stem. The cyme inflorescence consists of two or three flowers and appears from April to August. Cylindrical capsules are 4-5 mm in length and appear from July to September^[92].

Habitat and Distribution

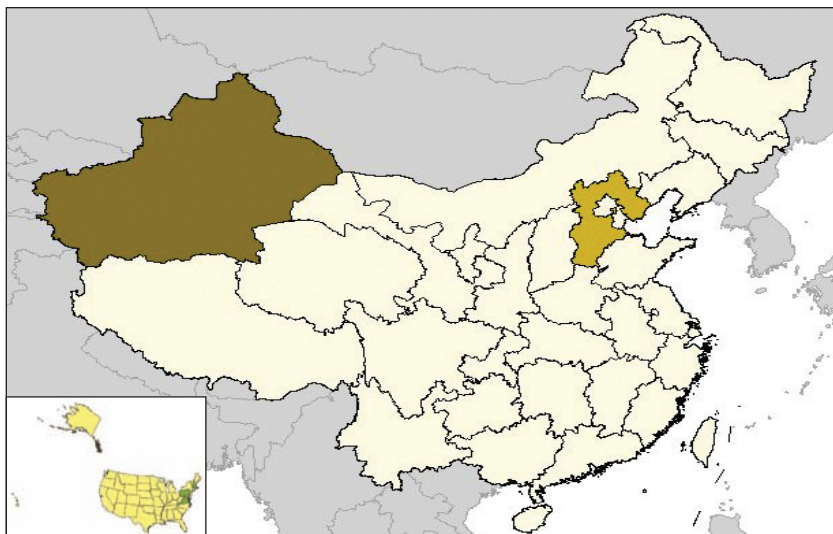
Lythrum virgatum occurs naturally in wetlands near rivers, swamps, pools, reservoirs, and riverbanks in northern Xinjiang^{[92][175]} and is reported to grow in Hebei^[92].

Economic Importance

Lythrum virgatum is often cultivated as an ornamental.

Related Species

Similar to *Lythrum salicaria*, *L.*



intermedium Ledeb. ex. Colla is a perennial that flowers in July through September and fruits in October. A distinguishing characteristic is the glabrous surface, and hairs only at the edges of leaves and bracts. It occurs in moist grasslands and is distributed

in Hebei, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, and Shandong^[92].

Natural Enemies of *Lythrum*

No fungi have been reported to occur on the genus *Lythrum* in China. Only two insects are recorded for *L. salicaria*.

Arthropods

Order	Family	Species	H. R.	Ref.
Lepidoptera	Pyralidae	<i>Cryptoblabes gnidiella</i> (Millière)	po	145
	Sphingidae	<i>Pergesa elpenor lewisi</i> (Butler)	p	65
			p	141
			p	158
			p	206
			po	208