

Purple Loosestrife

Regno: flora

Wet and marshland meadows

 [lythrumsalicaria.jpg](#) [1]

Purple Loosestrife - *Lythrum salicaria*

A plant with a large, spindle-shaped underground rhizome.

The erect, slightly woody stems, which are downy at the base, grow up to 120 cm tall, are four-sided, unbranched or with short branches at the top.

The lanceolate leaves, with no stalks, are opposite or in whorls of three, the upper ones smaller in the form of bracts. The Latin and common Italian name of the species (Salcerella = Little Willow) refer to the resemblance of the leaves to those of Willow.

The inflorescence is an evident spike of numerous flowers arranged in whorls one above the other.

The splendid red-purple flowers can vary from plant to plant and appear in three different forms, depending on the position and length of the styles and stamens.

These morphological differences found in the flowers seem to have developed to make pollination easier and safer for insects which also visit other species of plants and to avoid self pollination.

Lythrum salicaria is widespread and common throughout Italy; it grows abundantly in peripheral wet meadows, at the edges of pools and on the banks of ditches. It generally begins to flower in June and continues to flower until the month of October.

The plant contains a tannin-rich juice which was used in the past to treat leather instead of Oak bark.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.zoneumidetoscane.it/sites/default/files/lythrumsalicaria.jpg>