Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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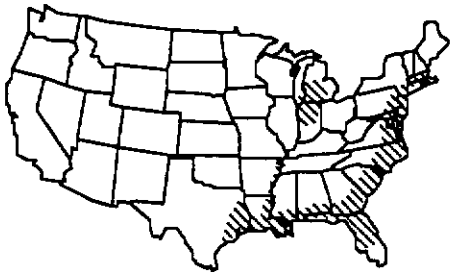
MASSACHUSETTS THREATENED PLANTS

Round-fruited False-loosestrife
(Ludwigia sphaerocarpa Ell.)

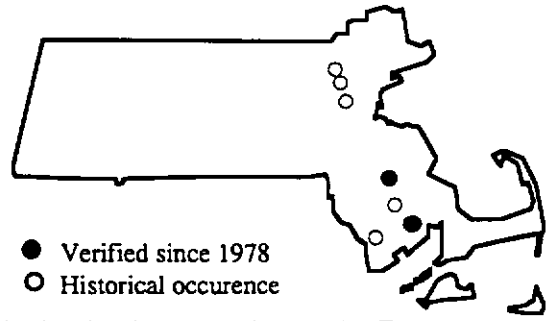
Description: Round-fruited False-loosestrife is an erect, branching, finely pubescent, shrub-like perennial that stands .03-1 m (1-3 ft.) tall. Leaves are alternate, lanceolate, and narrowed at both ends. Flowers are produced singly at the leaf bases, and are greenish and inconspicuous, but the triangular sepals are readily apparent. The dry fruits are rounded, softly hairy capsules. When submerged or standing in water, the stem bases become spongy and thickened. Except for the semi-woody base, the plant dies back each winter. Flowering occurs from July to September.

Similar Species: The False-loosestrife genus is represented by several local species that inhabit wet places. All are similarly erect and branched above except for Water-purslane *(Ludwigia palustris)*, a very common species, easily identified by oval leaves and prostrate stems. Seedbox *(L. alternifolia)* has conspicuous yellow petals and square capsules, while *L. sphaerocarpa* has no petals. Many-fruited False-loosestrife *(L. polycarpa)*, threatened in Massachusetts, is very similar but has smooth capsules and inhabits floodplain swamps along the Connecticut River.

G.T. Stevens. Illustr. Flowering Pl. Middle Atlantic & N. Engl. States.1930



Range of Round-fruited Loose-strife



Distribution in Massachusetts by Town
1990

Range: Round-fruited False-loosestrife is an Atlantic coastal plain species locally distributed from Massachusetts south to central Florida and Texas with disjunct populations in n.w. Indiana and s.w. Michigan. Massachusetts marks the northern limit of its range. It is listed as rare in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Tennessee, Indiana, Michigan, and extirpated in Pennsylvania.

Habitat in Massachusetts: This plant is found on nutrient-rich, muddy, sandy to peaty shores and in shallow water of freshwater ponds and slow-moving rivers which experience fluctuating water levels. This is an easily overlooked species whose habitat requirements are not well-known or well-documented in this state. Its associates, however, may include Plymouth Gentian *(Sabatia kennedyana)*, Chair-maker's Rush *(Scirpus pungens)*, Golden Pert *(Gratiola aurea)*, Canada Rush *(Juncus canadensis)*, and Bayonet Rush *(Juncus militaris)*.

Population Status: Round-fruited False-loosestrife is assigned to the Threatened category of state listed rare native plants. It is known from only two current stations (since 1978) and five historical (prior to 1978) stations have not been relocated. One current population is very large and on state land. Apparently this species has disappeared from several historical locations on the Concord River, but further searches of suitable habitat could locate more populations. Potential threats to the Round-fruited False-loosestrife are increased recreational use, boat launching, residential building and manipulation of water levels for water supply.