

# Beetles do battle against weed

*Biologists to release bugs to fight purple loosestrife*

By Mary Agnes Welch

**B**IOLOGISTS will take care to avoid city fogging trucks this week when they release special beetles to gobble up Winnipeg's noxious purple loosestrife weed.

As part of their annual battle against the weed, staff with the Manitoba Purple Loosestrife Project want to scatter about 5,000 brown beetles around Winnipeg. They will target wet areas where more than 100 stalks of the invasive violet flower have taken root.

The ladybug-sized beetle, called *hylobius transversovittatus*, devours purple loosestrife, which has become a serious threat to the province's ecology. The imported weed chokes marshes and waterways, displaces native plants and damages wildlife habitats.

Biologist Cory Lindgren, who runs the loosestrife project, said spreading the beetles around the province is the most effective and greenest way to combat the weed.

But he feared the beetles could be harmed by the pesticide malathion, which the city has used to blitz mosquitoes almost every night for the last month.

Lindgren considered bypassing Winnipeg altogether, but he reached a deal with city staff to release the beetles in locations fogging trucks can't access.

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Biologists will release brown beetles that devour purple loosestrife, a noxious weed that can choke waterways.

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## Rid your yard of purple loosestrife and other invasive plants

Now is the perfect time to rid your yard of purple loosestrife. In the next two weeks, it will go to seed and it will be too late to control its spread. Dig out the plant and root system and burn it or let it dry for 10 days. When dead, place the plant in two or three dark garbage bags, knot the bag tightly and toss in the garbage.

Tossing out purple loosestrife while it's still alive will only help the weed take root at the dump.

**Other invasive plants to watch out for:** Biologists are warning Manitobans about three more species that are migrating north and causing damage.

■ The flowering rush, an aquatic plant with pink flowers and long stems, has

been introduced into several Manitoba water bodies.

■ Salt cedar is a shrub or tree-like creeping vine close to Manitoba. A plant can suck up more than 200 liters of water per day, drying up wetlands.

■ Eurasian watermilfoil forms a weed-like mat over lakes, choking existing vegetation.