

THE LOOSESTRIFE SPECIES OF SASKATCHEWAN

A. C. Budd
Swift Current

The Loosestrife (Lysimachia) genus belongs to the Primrose (Primulaceae) family and in Saskatchewan we have three species, one common and widespread and the others more local and scarcer.

The common species, Fringed Loosestrife (Lysimachia ciliata L.) is often mistaken for a kind of Buttercup but the differences are very marked when the plants are examined. The Fringed Loosestrife grows from a horizontal root-stock to a height of from one to three feet, and the leaves are borne oppositely on the stem and are from two to six inches long, ovate to lanceolate in shape, pointed at the apex and rounded at the base. They are pale green in colour and smooth except for a row of very fine hairs around the margins. The leaf stalks, however, bear a row of short white hairs along one side, from which are derived both the common and scientific names of this species, ciliate meaning fringed. There are five separate sepals to the flower and a yellow, rotate corolla with five deep petal lobes, but the petals are united at the base and not separate as in the case of Buttercups. Around the central Stigma of the flower are five stamens, each opposite a petal lobe and between each of these are staminodia or sterile stamens which are merely small appendages. The flowers are from five-eighths to one inch across when fully expanded and are borne on long stalks from the axils of the upper pairs of leaves. This species is quite common in moist places, shaded coulees, slough and ditch banks throughout the entire province.

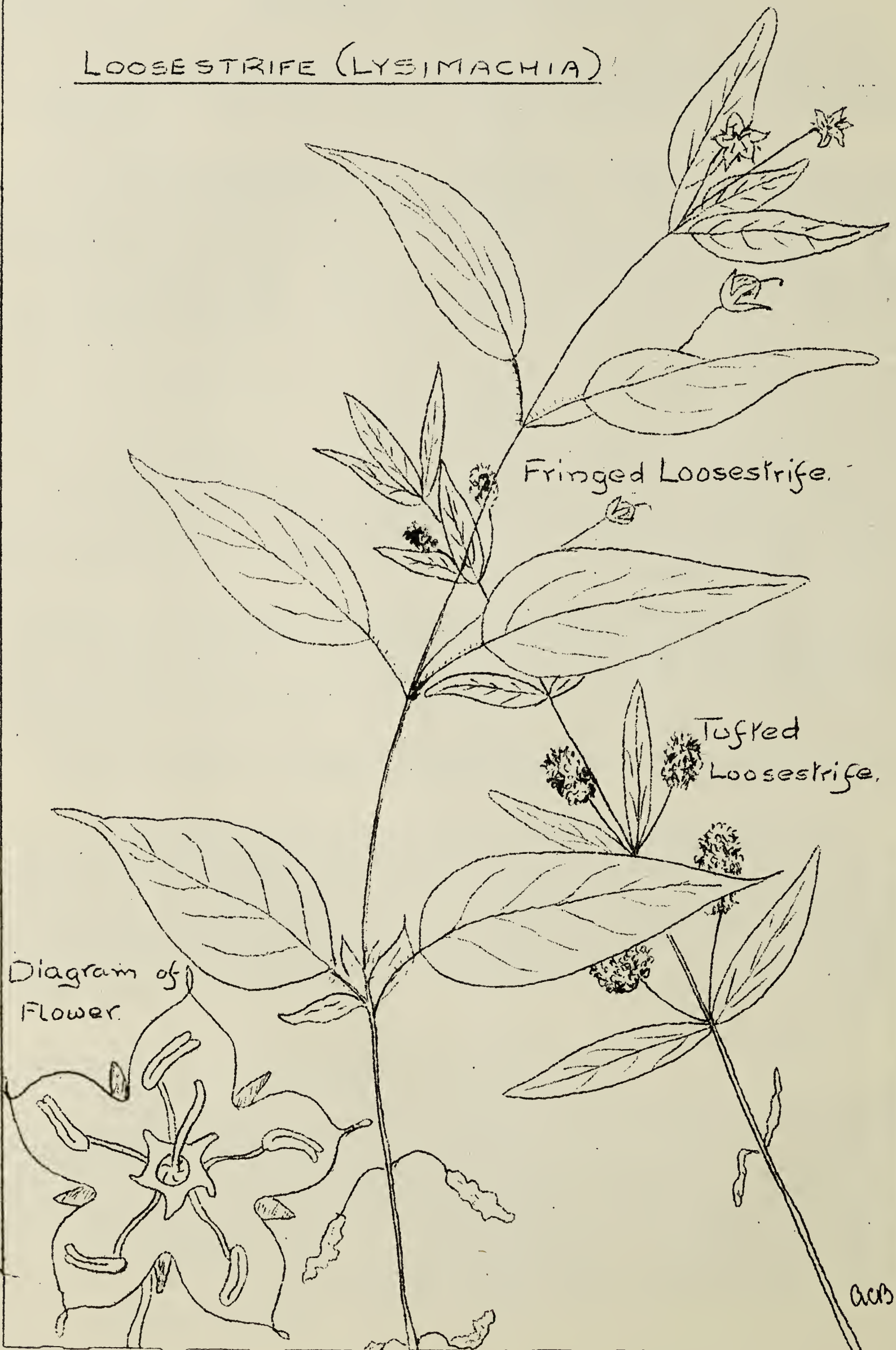
The Lance-leaved Loosestrife (Lysimachia hybrida Michx.) is somewhat similar to the previous species but the leaves are all narrowly lanceolate to linear-lanceolate in shape and are tapered instead of rounded at the base, and either stalkless or with very short stalks. The flowers are smaller than those of the Fringed Loosestrife, from one half to three quarters of an inch across, but are otherwise similar. This species is quite uncommon and is generally found in wet meadows and sloughs apparently needing more moisture than the Fringed Loosestrife.

The third species, Tufted Loosestrife (Lysimachia thyrsiflora L.) is only to be found in swamps and wet places in the more northern forested areas and in the Cypress Hills and is often found growing in shallow water. The plants grow from six inches to two feet in height and the leaves are lanceolate to linear-lanceolate, from two to four inches long and have no stalks. The flowers are from three sixteenths to a quarter of an inch across, yellow, and are borne in dense clusters or racemes from half to one inch long on stalks in the axils of the leaves.

A simple key to distinguish our Saskatchewan Loosestrifes is as follows:

1. Flowers borne in short, compact clusters on stalks in the leaf axils.
Lysimachia thyrsifolia.
- Flowers each on a separate stalk from the leaf axils. 2.
2. Leaves long stalked, lanceolate, rounded at the base; flowers usually over three quarters of an inch across. *Lysimachia ciliata.*
Leaves short stalked or stalkless, linear-lanceolate, tapering to the base: Flowers not over three quarters of an inch across.
Lysimachia hybrida.

LOOSESTRIFE (LYSIMACHIA)



Fringed Loosestrife.

Tufted Loosestrife.

Diagram of Flower.

A.C.B.

The name Loosestrife has its origin in the ancient belief that a European species of this genus had the power of quieting wild beasts and these plants were placed on the yokes of the oxen to keep them from conflict. Lysimachia is Greek, meaning literally "release strife."



SASKATCHEWAN WILD FLOWERS

The patch of pure white Fireweed that Mr. Francis discovered at Torch River in 1948, grew this year to a considerably larger patch. He writes that it looked very beautiful growing so near to the usual rose-coloured variety, thriving in a sunny spot surrounded by heavy forest.

- - - - -

"He who knows the most; he who knows what sweets and virtues are in the ground; the waters, the plants, the heavens and how to come to these enchantments, is the rich and royal man."

---Emerson

- - - - -

If you like
this issue of the
BLUE JAY tell your friends;-
if you do not, tell us. We will be
very pleased to receive your frank opinion
and constructive criticism...

