

# In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



Dying gooseneck loose strife  
August 8, 2008

## **When your love affair with a plant ends**

*Lysimachia clethroides*

I saw you first at night  
    swaying to the music of the wind  
Your grace beguiled  
    your delicate white neck invited my touch  
I succumbed.

I had to possess you  
    so I could gaze at you  
Drink in your elegance  
    revel in your beauty  
I delighted in your presence.

Not content with your place  
    you had to take over  
Your hold is choking  
    blocking out all other beauty  
You irk me.

You've become the possessor  
boundaries have been overstepped  
I cannot have that  
I must kill you.

I wrote the above lines in response to my feelings for the gooseneck loosestrife that has taken over my perennial beds. I remember selecting this plant with so much eagerness. It is an attractive plant and hardy to zone four. The white gooseneck-like racemes bloom from July into August. The shoots and leaves have been used as famine food.

It grows in sun and semi-shade. It spreads through underground runners. To my disappointment, I've found that it does so rather rapidly and hence pushes out all other plants. In my beds of limited space, they are the plant equivalent of bullies. Mind you, each bed started with just a single plant. Over four years, they staged a military coup. It has taken me two additional years to admit to myself that they have to go. As far as I know, it is not listed as invasive. I can see its use in a large space where there is much to fill in. Digging them up is tough as the entire lot is connected by the underground runners. I'd have to lift up all the other plants and bulbs. Hence, killing them is the only way to selectively be rid of them.

Still, I have managed to dig some up to give to a friend who has an eight acre property that he needs to cultivate with good spreaders. The rest will bite the dust. I do think that this is one of those good lessons. We must plant the right plants in the right places. Divide when necessary, dig up when too big and be willing to make changes. Face up to mistakes, failures and losses. The garden keeps teaching.



## Dying gooseneck loose strife



Gooseneck loosestrife has taken over.

