

Pale & Black Swallow-wort Control

Mechanical control for eradication

- Effective for eradication on a small scale if very thorough and dedicated. Complete root crown must be dug out before seeds ripen. Burn any plants bearing seeds.
- Be careful not to spread seeds, wash clothing, especially soles of shoes/boots.
- Mowing, even several times a year, will not eradicate swallow-wort but will prevent a seed crop.

What can you do?

Bring recycled plastic bags in your birding kit and pull when you find swallow wort. Throw bags in trash, Cook bags in sun first. Do not compost or put out with plant material for the town to collect, seeds can live 4-5 years!

Thanks, the RBA Conservation Committee

Information from Cornell Cooperative Extension, The Nature Conservancy, and Finger Lakes Prism



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Pale and Black Swallow-wort Factsheet



Jeromy Biazzo/USDA

Flowering black swallow-wort *Vincetoxicum nigrum* (left) and **pale swallow-wort** *Vincetoxicum rossicum* (right).

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Swallow-wort Factsheet

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This photo shows a monoculture of swallow-wort that overtook this forest floor. Larissa Smith



Identification

Black and pale swallow-worts, also known as “dog-strangling vines,” are perennial, herbaceous vines that grow from 2 to 6 1/2 ft in length. Native to Eurasia, these species are adapted to a variety of habitats where they out compete native species.

- Both species of swallow-worts can be found in mixed hardwood forest to heavily shaded woods.
- They also can be found in disturbed sunny areas, open fields, and along roadsides in moist or dry soils.
- Twining, vine-like perennial
- Reproduces by seed and axillary tillers from root crown if main stem is damaged.

Identification (cont.)

- **Fruit:** The fruit is a smooth, slender, pointed pod that looks much like a milkweed pod. The pods are light green in color and are frequently borne in pairs. They are abundant during July and August. Like milkweed, the pods open in late summer, disseminating large numbers of downy seeds. Can produce 2,000 seeds per square yard.



Photo Credit: John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org.

Impacts

- May restrict access to infested areas due to extensive twining
- Grazers tend to avoid swallow-wort because it is not as palatable as other plant species
- Pure stands of swallow-wort suppress the establishment of other species and interfere with forest regeneration.

- Related to **milkweeds**, swallow-worts are toxic to livestock, deer and **monarch butterfly larvae**, which are sometimes fooled into laying their eggs on these plants, but their larvae do not survive.

Swallow-wort management schedule for Central and Northern New York

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
search for new infestations	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
dig out complete root crowns, destroy	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
mow plants with young pods			•	•			
destroy plants with plump pods			•	•	•		
stay out of patches with ripe pods			•	•	•	•	•
apply foliar herbicide spray			•	•			
hygiene during seed dispersal, clean equipment, shoes and clothing			•	•	•	•	•