

BLACK SWALLOW-WORT

Cynanchum louiseae

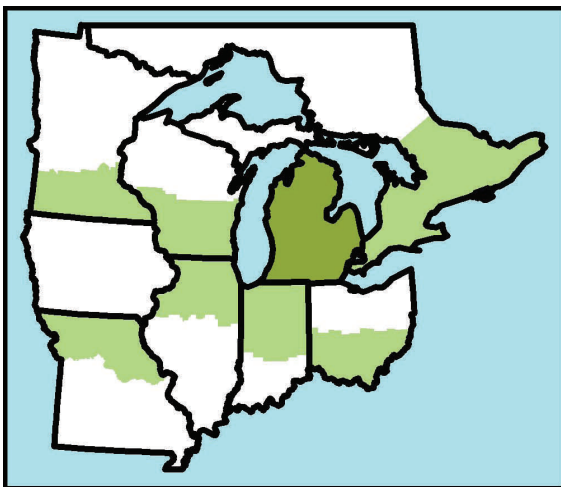


Description: Black Swallow-Wort is a herbaceous, perennial vine with twines 3-8 feet high. Its leaves are dark green and shiny, opposite, 2-5 inches long, toothless, and narrowly to broadly oval with pointed tips. Flowers are tiny and dark purple with 5 pointed, downy, triangular petals that are as long as they are wide. Seedpods are milkweed-like, slender and tapered, and 1.5-3 inches long. Seeds are on silky filaments.



Native range: Europe: Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain. (<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/cylo1.htm>)

Ecological threat: This plant threatens woodlands, forests, grasslands, and savannas. Black swallow-wort can form extensive patches that crowd out the native vegetation. Old field habitats of goldenrod and grasses can be replaced almost exclusively by swallow-wort, completely changing their physical structure. Impacts of the change in physical structure and insect communities on grassland and old field nesting birds is not yet known.



Current North American Range: This species has been observed in northern portions of Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana, and southern areas of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ohio. It is also known to be throughout the state of Michigan and into Canada.

Current Midwest general distribution, including southern Ontario Not Known Isolated Locally Abundant Widespread

Early Detection and Rapid Response Can Help Stop the Spread!

BLACK SWALLOW-WORT, *Cynanchum louiseae*

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: (<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/cylo1.htm>)

As with all invasive species, early detection and removal is the best approach for preventing the establishment and spread of this plant. If you find some black swallow-wort, look for more, and aim to remove all plants at a site. Stay out of patches that are actively dispersing seeds, unless you plan to collect and dispose of the seeds carefully. Clean all machinery that has traveled through swallow-wort patches that have maturing or dispersing pods. For large established infestations, chemical control is the most effective means.

Biological

There are no biological controls available for this plant.

Chemical

Two systemic herbicides - Garlon® 4 (triclopyr ester) and Roundup Pro® (glyphosate) – have been found to be effective in controlling black swallow-wort. These herbicides should be applied when plants are actively growing, after flowering has begun. **DO NOT SPRAY TOO SOON.** Avoid the temptation to spray the plants as soon as they emerge in May. Only when the plants flower will they be large enough to receive enough spray on the exposed leaf surface to deliver a killing dose to the roots. Plants that are sprayed before pods form will probably not produce a viable seed crop that season. Be patient. Systemic herbicides do not cause a “burn down” of plants like contact herbicides do. Within 1-2 weeks the plants will look sick. There may be dead tissue spots on most leaves many yellowing leaves. Do not waste herbicide, money or effort by spraying plants twice. Sick plants cannot effectively absorb the herbicide through the leaf surface or move the herbicide to the roots. Swallow-wort control may take a few years and it is important not to use more herbicide than is necessary.

Manual

Remove pod-bearing plants from the site and destroy them. Eradication on a small scale must be very thorough and requires dedication. The complete root crown must be dug out before the seeds ripen. Plants bearing seeds should be burned or bagged and disposed of in a landfill. Infested land might be brought under control by plowing and planting an annual crop until the seed soil bank is depleted, possibly as long as five years.

Mechanical

Mowing, even several times a year, will not eradicate swallow-wort however, it can be employed to prevent a seed crop. Cutting is most effective at preventing a mature seed crop if done in early to mid-July, when there are small, immature pods on the plants. Cutting during the flowering period but before pod formation will allow plants to recover and still produce a viable seed crop. Monitor mowed areas and mow a second time if pods reach mature size in late summer or early fall. Hay cutters can contribute to the spread of swallow-wort if cutting is not timed correctly. Hay crops infested with swallow-wort and then sold elsewhere can be a means of introducing swallow-wort to new areas.

For more information on control and management of this species, please visit the following Web sites: www.usda.plants.gov, www.nps.gov/plants/alien/factmain.htm, tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/control.html.

Early Detection and Rapid Response Can Help Stop the Spread!

