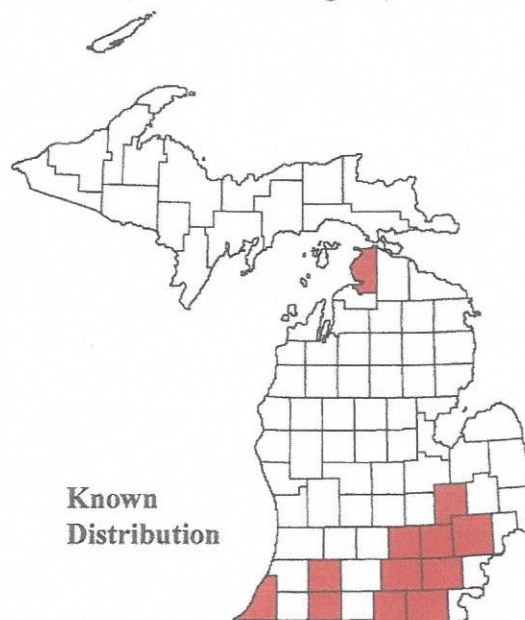


Black and Pale Swallow-worts

Cynanchum rossicum (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*) and *Cynanchum louiseae* (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*)



Habit:

Herbaceous perennials; both range from 0.6-1.8 m (2-6 ft) tall.

Leaves:

Simple, opposite, narrow, oblong to ovate with a pointed tip; dark green leaves with a smooth, waxy coating; emits a pungent herbal smell when crushed.

Stems:

Twining; may climb or creep around adjacent plants.

Flowers:

Small, five-petaled, clustered in leaf axils; bloom June-August; slight rotting odor; *V. nigrum*: purple-black with straight white hairs on dorsal surface; peduncles 0.3-3 cm; *V. rossicum*: pale to dark maroon, purple or pink, glabrous; peduncles 2-5 mm.

Fruits/Seeds:

Narrow elongate seedpod, 4-7 cm (1.5-2.75 in) in length, similar to milkweed or dogbane pods; contain numerous flat brown seeds with tufts of white fibers; split open in mid-summer to release wind-borne seeds.

Habitat:

Found in hardwood forests, shaded woods, open prairies, fields, savannas, roadsides; can tolerate a range of light and soil conditions.

Reproduction:

By seed; vegetatively by rhizomes and shoots from root crown of parent plant.

Similar Species:

Native dogbanes (*Apocynum* spp.) have similar seedpods but are not vines.

Comments:

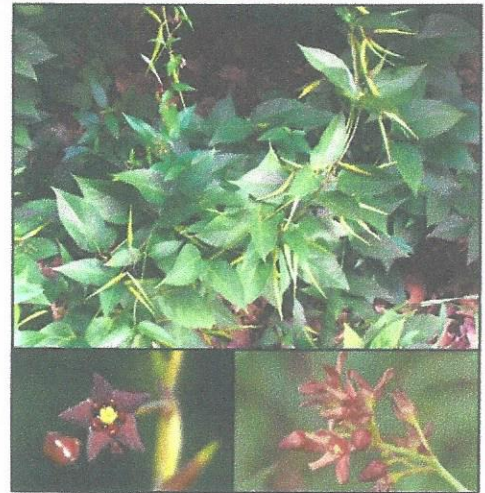
Native to Eurasia. Grows rapidly over native vegetation; wind-dispersed seed travels long distances. Toxins may pose a threat to grazing farm animals when incorporated into hay bales.

Monitoring & Rapid Response:

Monitor disturbed sites and also edges and paths in undisturbed sites; populations most visible in late summer when the leaves turn golden and seedpods appear. Hand-pulling ineffective—dig out entire root crown; burn or place in landfill. Foliar herbicide treatment provides effective control; two applications needed in a year for large, monotypic stands. Prescribed fire is not effective when used alone and may improve conditions for increased germination; fire may be useful following herbicide application to control seedlings with less developed root systems. Remove and burn seedpods; multi-year monitoring and follow-up required.

ID: Both black swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*) and pale swallow-wort (*V. rossicum*) are found in Michigan. Also known by the common name dog-strangling vine, swallow-worts are herbaceous, perennial vines that twine around other vegetation. They commonly reach 3-5 feet in height. Leaves are dark green, opposite, 2-5 inches long and are narrowly oval in shape. The flowers of black swallow-wort are small, dark purple, and have 5 bluntly triangular petals covered in fine hairs. The petals of pale swallow-wort are elongated, pink, and have no hairs. Both species develop milkweed-like pods containing fluffy seeds that are dispersed by wind in the fall.

Impacts: Both black and pale swallow-wort are highly invasive and displace desirable vegetation in upland natural areas, old fields, and landscape settings. Plants are most aggressive in open habitats.



Black swallow-wort Pale swallow-wort

Mechanical Control: Pulling is ineffective, but plants may be dug out if the entire root crown is removed. Clipping, mowing, or burning are also ineffective, since plants will resprout vigorously. Cutting may be used to prevent seed set if plants are cut immediately after pods have formed but seeds are not yet mature. Preventing seed dispersal is imperative; collect and destroy all seed pods if not undertaking other control measures.

Chemical Control: Both glyphosate (RoundUp) and triclopyr (Garlon) are effective; 2-4,D is ineffective. An applicator's license is required by law unless working on your personal property. Always follow the herbicide label instructions.

Herbicide	%	Surfactant	Timing	Pros	Cons	Use When
Garlon 4 Ultra (triclopyr)	1%	Non-ionic (e.g. Cleancut)	1x Aug/Sept	Highly effective; won't kill grasses	Can't spray over water; more expensive	Want to preserve grasses, not working in wetlands
Garlon 3A (triclopyr)	2%	Wetland-approved* (e.g. Cygnet)	1x Aug/Sept	Can use over water* won't kill grasses	Need higher concentration; higher health risk	Want to preserve grasses and working in wetlands*
RoundupPro (glyphosate)	2%	Already included in some products	2x June & Aug	Inexpensive, less toxic	Non-selective, kills all plants	Monotypic stands present

*Permits may be required from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality when using herbicides in wetlands.

- In large monotypic stands, two applications in the same year will be necessary, as juveniles and seedlings will be sheltered from the initial spraying by larger plants above.
- Triclopyr is most successful when applied late in summer (late August or early September) before pods form viable seeds (seed heads in pods turning dry and brown). Glyphosate is successful during both flowering and early fruiting.
- Do not apply herbicides during a drought, as plants will not translocate chemicals well.
- Use cardboard barriers to minimize non-target spray if desirable vegetation or water are adjacent.
- Always monitor effectiveness of control efforts. In dense monotypic stands with a large seedbank, 3-5 years of treatment may be necessary. Replanting with native species will likely be necessary in heavily infested sites.

References:

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Citation: O'Connor, R. 2008. Swallow-wort control fact sheet. Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Lansing, MI. 1 p.