

Black Swallow-wort

Cynanchum louiseae



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Spring brings the vines and flowers



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Then the flowers turn to narrow pods



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The pods open to disperse the seeds

This **severely invasive** vine in Maine has long, slim non-branching stems that twine and sprawl over other vegetation. It is **allelopathic**, meaning it chemically changes soil conditions, reducing nearby native plant growth.

- Leaves are opposite each other on the stem, dark green, shiny, lance- or heart-shaped, smooth-edged, 2 – 5" long.
- Stems are green and thin.
- Flowers are purplish-black, with five petals, fragrant, ¼"- wide, June – September (particularly on plants growing in shade).
- Fruits are slender green pods, 1.5 – 3" long, that ripen to brown.
- Seeds are brown with hairy plumes at their end, like common milkweed. Pods often remain on stems into winter.

NOTE: Monarch butterflies need milkweeds to carry on their life cycle. The butterflies mistake Black Swallow-wort for one of the native milkweeds and lay their eggs on it. The larvae hatch, eat the Black Swallow-wort leaves, and die from the toxins in the leaves causing a decline in Monarch populations!

HOW TO CONTROL:

- Monitor for emerging purple/black flowers in June, and cut, bag, and dispose of all plant parts to prevent seeds.
- Dig out a large area around the base of small plants before seed pods are present. Mowing encourages re-sprouting. Monitor and repeat throughout the growing season to prevent seed pod production.
- If pods are present, carefully cut, and bag. Pods will continue to mature after being cut, so dispose of them carefully.

WIDESPREAD INVASIONS:

- If beyond 25' from water, spray with Ortho Brush-B-Gon just when pods are starting to form (not earlier), typically before mid-July. Repeat 3 weeks later, then repeat for 2-3 years.
- Certified professionals may spray 2% glyphosate (Rodeo) and .5% triclopyr (Garlon-3A) tank-mixed with surfactant (Cide-Kick II) just when pods are starting to form; repeat after 3 weeks, for 2-3 years.

NOTE: Plants may build resistance to herbicide.

Sources

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<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2523e/>;

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/features/invasive_plants/cynanchum.htm

Controls

Amanda Devine, Maine Coast Heritage Trust (adevine@mcht.org);

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/features/invasive_plants/cynanchum.htm;

<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2523e/>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AagjyKNPCU>
