

Dig up all the roots to control small plants.



Use cardboard to shield desirable plants when spraying herbicide.



SWALLOW-WORT

A Homeowner's Guide to Small-Scale Control

SWALLOW-WORT IS AN INVASIVE SPECIES

Swallow-wort (a.k.a. Dog Strangling Vine) is an invasive plant which has recently become a problem in Oakland County. Without the natural competitors in its native habitat in Europe, it is growing unchecked and crowding out native plants that our wildlife depend on for survival.

Black (*Cynanchum louiseae*) and Pale (*C. rossicum*) Swallow-wort are perennial herbaceous thin vines that twist around themselves and surrounding vegetation. The vines grow up to eight feet high, have opposite leaves, and ooze clear sap when broken.

DANGERS OF SWALLOW-WORT

Swallow-wort lowers property values in both agricultural land and natural areas. Its vines blanket and smother native plants. Swallow-wort has anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties, which gives it a competitive advantage over native plants. The plant contains chemicals that are toxic to mammals, including livestock and horses. Swallow-wort also tastes bad to many insect larvae and are toxic to some.

Monarch butterflies may confuse swallow-wort with native milkweed, which is a plant they depend on for survival. Monarchs may lay their eggs on the invasive plant; however, caterpillars are not able to survive on swallow-wort and will die.



WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) is a partnership of local townships, county agencies and conservation organizations working to control invasive plants.

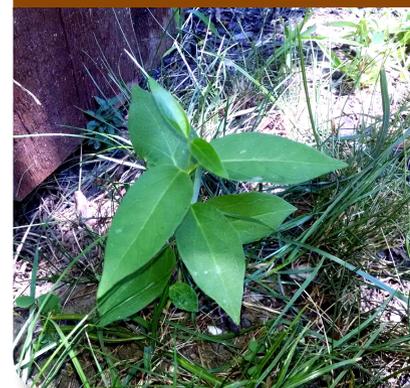
Larger swallow-wort infestations may require repeated treatments or different treatment options. More information is available from your township and at:

- The Oakland County CISMA (stewardshipnetwork.org/oc-cisma or www.facebook.com/occisma)
- Midwest Invasive Plant Network (mipn.org)
- Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN.msu.edu)
- State of Michigan invasive species resources: www.michigan.gov/invasives



Removing swallow-wort infestations makes room for beautiful native plants, restores wildlife habitat, protects our livestock, horses and outdoor recreation areas.

Don't let this...



Turn into this.



www.stewardshipnetwork.org/oc-cisma
www.facebook.com/occisma

Spring

Starting in May-June, swallow-wort has shiny, dark-green, smooth, narrow leaves with pointed tips. The vines have tiny star-shaped purple or pink flowers during this time. The vines climb by wrapping around and eventually smothering other vegetation.



Summer

By mid-summer, long thin seed pods hang from the twisting vines. The pods resemble those of milkweeds. The best time for treatment is when the vine is flowering (June-August).



SWALLOW-WORT THROUGH THE SEASONS

Winter

Swallow-wort may be easiest to see in the winter when the dried, twisted stems and empty seedpods hang from the vines.



Fall

As the seed pods mature and dry, they open, releasing flat brown seeds on white fluffy parachutes that float in the wind. Swallow-wort turns brown and becomes dormant for the winter.



SWALLOW-WORT TREATMENT

For best results, treat swallow-wort June through August, while plants are flowering but before seed pods fully develop. Pulling, cutting, mowing, and burning can prevent plants from producing seed pods and reduce spreading, but the root crown will be left to re-sprout. Homeowners can treat swallow-wort using herbicide called glyphosate (found in Round-Up and other brands) or triclopyr (found in Brush Be Gone and other brands).



Young plants under a year old only have a few stalks and shallow roots (photo above). It is possible to dig up these young plants, making sure to remove all of the roots. Seedlings are easily removed when they first appear, usually in late May or June. Treat before seedpods form or cut the vine to remove pods. Spray the remaining plant with herbicide.

Small infestations may be sprayed with herbicide. It is generally necessary to spray twice in the growing season because it will re-sprout. Protect desired surrounding vegetation by shielding or cutting back the leaves.

Larger infestations are best treated by a professional contractor. Contact the Oakland County CISMA at 248-660-0716 for a list of qualified contractors.

All seedpods must be bagged and landfilled (not composted), because the seeds may ripen even after being picked. Infestations must be treated for several years to kill all the roots and seeds.