Black swallow-wort
Vincetoxicum nigrum

Description
Grows rapidly over native vegetation; wind-dispersed seed travels long distances.

Habit
Herbaceous perennial, 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; slight

rotting odor; purple-black; straight white hairs on
dorsal surface; peduncles 0.3-3 cm; blooms June
through August.

Fruits and Seeds
Seed pod, resemble those of milkweed, pods split open in mid-summer to release wind-borne seeds.

Habitat
Native to southern Europe. 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
Native dogbanes (Apocynum spp.) have similar seedpods but are not vines.

Monitoring and 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 difficult as roots are fragile, digging preferred, remove roots from site. Foliar herbicide treatment provides effective control; cut-stem herbicide application provides slightly less effective control and is labor intensive. 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. Please report sightings with GPS positions to Dr. DiTommaso at: ad97@cornell.edu.

Credits

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