

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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