



BLACK SWALLOWWORT, PALE SWALLOWWORT

Vincetoxicum nigrum,
Vincetoxicum rossicum
Origin: Europe

INVASIVE RANKING, NYS

Very High

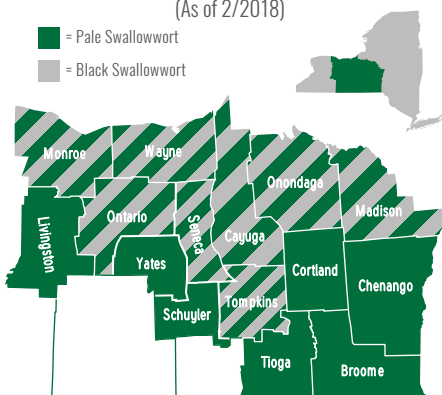
MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Chemical
Physical
Prevention

DISTRIBUTION

(As of 2/2018)

■ = Pale Swallowwort
■ = Black Swallowwort



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Black and pale swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum* and *V. rossicum*) are invasive, herbaceous, perennial vines. Leaves are shiny, dark green, and narrowly oval or heart-shaped, with smooth edges and sharply pointed tips. The leaves are oppositely arranged. Swallowwort stems grow in a spiral pattern and are covered in tiny hairs. Swallowworts closely resemble the related common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*).

Swallowwort flowers are five petaled and clustered at the base of leaf stems. Pale swallowwort blooms from May through mid-July; its small flowers have petals twice as long as they are wide, ranging from pink to dark burgundy in color. Black swallowwort blooms in June and July; its flowers are small and dark purple in color, with petals covered in fine hairs and about as wide as they are long.

HABITAT

Both swallowwort species are shade tolerant, but grow more aggressively when exposed to open areas of sunlight. They occur along roadsides, in gardens, old fields and pastures, forests, limestone rich environments with thin soil, and along the edges of low lying marshy areas. They can tolerate only brief periods of flooding.

THREAT

Swallowworts can form dense populations that outcompete native species, and are a serious threat to monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*). They crowd out milkweed patches where monarchs lay their eggs and their larvae feed and monarchs mistakenly lay eggs on swallowworts. As monarch caterpillars cannot survive on swallowwort, this further reduces monarch populations.

MANAGEMENT

These plants can be physically removed by thoroughly digging up root masses prior to seed dispersal. They may also be treated with herbicides once flowering has begun. Spread of swallowworts can be reduced if mowed consistently every year before seed pods are mature, although this will not affect rhizome growth.

REFERENCE - April 2014. Black And Pale Swallow-worts. Invasive Species Control. Michigan Natural Features Inventory. <https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/Swallow-wortBCP.pdf>

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