

CAUTION: Invasive Species

Swallow-wort

Swallow-wort, Black and Pale. Threatening our watershed, widespread thru NYS

Impact - Swallow-wort is a herbaceous plant and its vines spread quickly forming dense mats choking out large areas of favorable species interfering with forest regeneration. There are multiple species. Toxic chemicals in the plant make it poor forage for deer and other wildlife. It is similar to milkweed causing monarch butterflies to lay their eggs on the plant but the larvae die. Widespread thru NYS and found around Lake George.

What is swallow-wort? Native to Europe, black and pale swallow-worts are herbaceous, perennial, twining vines. Escaped from Massachusetts Botanical Gardens, it thrives in wide range of soil moisture and light conditions and is found in many habitats including woodlands, fields and roadsides. It spreads quickly once established.

How to identify - Both species look similar when not in flower and have 3-4" long by 2-3" wide oval dark green leaves are opposite and glossy. The leaves of the pale swallow-wort tend to be a lighter shade of green. Flowers of both species are similar and star-like. Small five petaled star-like maroon to pale pink flowers are present in late May through July. Abundant seed pods are smooth, slender and pointed in late summer and split open releasing innumerable downy seeds easily carried by wind. Milkweed like seed pods are 1 ½ to 3 inch long. Also spreads also by rhizomes.



(38)



(39)



(40)



(41)



Control - Individual plants or small infestations can be dug by hand but only if removal is extremely thorough. It can be difficult due to the deep fibrous root system. Remove as much of the root crown and rhizomes as possible before seeds form. Burn all plant parts or bag and solarize* for two weeks. When the plant is cut it resprouts vigorously making control difficult requiring herbicides for larger infestations. Foliar herbicides can be sprayed on the vines after they begin flowering but not too early in the season as ample leaf surface is needed to absorb and effectively kill the roots. May require repeat application. Areas that have been cleared should be planted with rapid growing native species. Note- the seed pods can mature even after the plant has been dug up.

* solarize-bag in plastic bags and leave in sun for two weeks then burn or dispose of in sanitary landfill.