

# Black Swallow-wort Vine

## *Cynanchum louiseae*

Early Detection, Rapid Response



Leaves opposite, dark green, shiny, lance- or heart-shaped, smooth-edged, 2 – 5 “ long.

Stems green, thin.

Flowers purplish-brown, with 5 petals, fragrant, ¼” wide, June through September (particularly on plants growing in shade).

Fruits slender green pods, 1.5 – 3” long, that ripen to dark brown.

Seeds brown with hairy tuft at end.

Pods often persist on stems.

Deciduous vine with single non-branching stem, up to 6’ long. Twines & sprawls over other vegetation, & dies back to ground each year. Often found in moist but not saturated soils.

**Where found:** Open areas, roadsides & other disturbed areas, edges, open woods, wet meadows.



**Similar native plants:** Native milkweeds have similar, generally larger pods and are not twining — e.g., **Swamp Milkweed** (*Asclepias incarnata*).



Harpswell Invasive Plants Partnership, 2015 (4/2015)  
[Sources: Maine Invasive Plants, bulletin #2523;  
Invasive Plant Atlas of New England]

# Control of Black Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*)

Choosing a control technique requires careful thought to the size and severity of the infestation and its proximity to water and other natural resources. The Harpswell Invasive Plant Partnership urges land owners to use mechanical (as opposed to chemical) controls whenever possible. Herbicide application within 25 feet of the water is not allowed in Harpswell. For more information about the town's pesticide ordinance, go to [www.harpswell.maine.gov](http://www.harpswell.maine.gov) >environment >pesticides >town's ordinance.

## Control methods in order of preference:

1. Dig out the root crowns when plants are small, and immature seed pods are present; repeated digging and monitoring are recommended throughout the growing season, until seeds are exhausted.
2. Herbicide treatment, if permitted: foliar application of glyphosate 2% when flowering begins; multiple follow-up applications may be necessary throughout the season. If pods are present, cut plants and wait for re-sprouts before treating. Repeat to exhaust seedbank. Plants may build resistance to herbicide.

(Sources: Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Casco Bay Invasive Species Network)

## FAQs

**Why control invasive plants?** Widespread infestations of invasive plants damage the lands and waters that native plants and animals need to survive. They out compete and displace native species.

**Why avoid chemical herbicides?** The most commonly-used herbicides for invasive plant control are glyphosate (Round-up), and Triclopyr (Garlan 4 and 3A ). Glyphosate is known to be mildly toxic to bees, which are already threatened. Triclopyr is slightly toxic to birds, fish, and aquatic invertebrates, and can cause severe damage to eyes.

**Why use chemicals?** Sometimes cautiously using herbicides causes less disturbance to the environment than other control methods available or the plant infestation is too large or dense to realistically remove mechanically. The Harpswell Invasive Plant Partnership advises a no-chemical approach when possible, and will update treatment possibilities as new information becomes available. Always follow the instructions on the container. Using chemicals that are mixed too strongly can damage the visible leaves while never seeping into the root structure to kill the plant.

**When should I control invasive plants?** It's important to pay attention to timing when controlling invasive plants. Spring manual control treatments are best so that the invasive can't enter the seed-spreading period. However, chemicals often won't work when sap is flowing during spring; so, waiting until the plant is receding during the late season is most effective when using chemicals.

**When using chemicals, why not just use Roundup (or Triclopyr) for every invasive?** Neither Roundup nor Triclopyr works reliably for all invasive plants. Following the guidelines advised by the Harpswell Invasive Plant Partnership will help you save money, protect the environment, and control the invasive plants successfully.