

## What is wrong with Phragmites?

Larger infestations may require repeated treatments or different treatment options. Please contact the Stewardship Network Swallow-wort Initiative.

More information is available at:

- Midwest Invasive Plant Network ([mipn.org](http://mipn.org))
- The Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at the Bugwood Network ([bugwood.org](http://bugwood.org))
- The Stewardship Network ([stewardshipnetwork.org](http://stewardshipnetwork.org))



In the fall, swallow-wort turns brown and becomes dormant for the winter. The empty seedpods and the twisting stems are easier to spot once native vegetation

has died back for the winter, but it is best to wait for summer to treat swallow-wort.



Photo by John Meyland

Removing infestations of swallow-wort will make room for beautiful native plants and restore habitat for wildlife.



P.O. Box 285  
Clarkston, MI 48347  
Phone: 248-846-6547  
Fax: 248-846-6548  
[mail@NOHLC.org](mailto:mail@NOHLC.org)  
[www.nohlc.org](http://www.nohlc.org)

## A Homeowner's Guide to Small-Scale Swallow-wort Control



Swallow-wort is an invasive alien plant which has recently become a problem in Michigan. Without the natural competitors in its native habitat, it is growing unchecked and crowding out native plants that our wildlife depend on for survival.

## What is wrong with Swallow-wort?

Swallow-wort blankets and smothers native plants. Swallow-wort grows so densely that it threatens woodlands, forests, and grasslands.

Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on swallow-wort, because it is related to the native milkweeds that monarchs depend on for survival. However, monarch caterpillars are not able to survive on swallow-wort, and die.

### Non-chemical Controls

Pulling is not effective because swallow-wort has both deep taproots and extensive shallow feeder roots. Pulling, cutting, mowing, and burning leave root fragments which will resprout, but these techniques can prevent plants from producing seedpods and spreading.



Native milkweed pods are wider and are on stiff stalks that don't twist around other plants and trees.

## Is this plant swallow-wort?

Two related species of swallow-wort have recently invaded Michigan; Black Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*) and Pale Swallow-Wort (*C. rossicum*). The two species are distinguished by the color of their tiny star-shaped flowers, which are purple or pink, respectively. Both species are perennial vines that grow about three to eight feet high. The vines climb by wrapping around and eventually smothering other vegetation. Swallow-wort has dark-green shiny smooth narrow leaves with pointed tips. Swallow-wort has rhizomes (underground stems) that sprout new plants and form clumps. Swallow-wort seedpods look like thin milkweed pods, with seeds on silky filaments that float in the wind.

Swallow-wort is the only Michigan plant in the milkweed family which is a vine.



Pale (left) and black (below and right) swallow-wort leaves, vines, flowers, and pods



## Can I get rid of small patches in my backyard?

Spraying with herbicide is the best way to eliminate small patches. The best time to eliminate swallow-wort is in June through September, before the seedpods ripen. Cut back the vines to about 2 feet and pick the seed pods. The pods must be bagged and landfilled, because the seeds may ripen even after being picked. Spray the remaining two feet of leaves with herbicide. Roundup™ and similar formulations of glyphosate are effective against swallow-wort. Protect native vegetation from the herbicide by shielding or cutting back the leaves. It may be necessary to spray twice in the growing season, because older plants will shield young plants from the initial spraying.

