

Pale Swallowwort (a.k.a. “dog strangling vine”)

(*Vincetoxicum rossicum*)



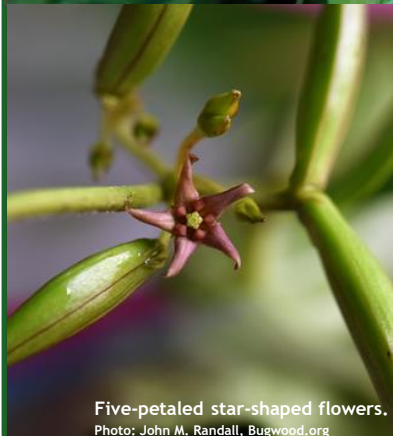
Leaves, seed pods and seeds.

Photo: John M. Randall, Bugwood.org



Swallowwort infestation.

Photo: David Nisbet, Bugwood.org



Five-petaled star-shaped flowers.

Photo: John M. Randall, Bugwood.org



Vines intertwined on itself.

Photo: Chris Evans, Bugwood.org

Key ID Features

Stems: Herbaceous vines that twine around adjacent structures. Vines can grow up to 6 ft.

Leaves: Opposite, lance-shaped with smooth edges, dark green and glossy.

Flowers: Five long and curled petals, light pink to purple.

Fruit: Long, smooth, and slender pod clusters. Dry seedpods are milk-weed like, and the seeds are on silky filaments.

Roots: Fleshy with a thickly budded rhizomatous crown just below the soil surface.



Small buds form before flowering.

Photo: Rob Routledge, Bugwood.org



Dried seed pods.

Lestlie J. Mehrhoff, Bugwood.org

The Impact

Pale swallow-wort is native to the Ukraine and south-eastern European Russia. Swallowworts were imported from Europe in the early 1900s for ornamental interest. The plants produce anti-bacterial and anti-fungal chemicals, as well as toxins that are harmful to native insects and mammals, including livestock. Swallowworts are fatal to monarch butterfly larvae, and can outcompete the preferred larval host of monarchs, common milkweed. Swallow-worts are in the periwinkle family, Apocynaceae, and appear similar to several native species in the same family, such as milkweeds and dogbanes. This plant threatens ecosystem biodiversity by forming extensive patches that crowd out native plant species. In some instances, old-field habitats occupied by goldenrods and grasses are replaced almost exclusively by swallow-wort, disrupting natural succession and completely altering the physical structure of those habitats.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Apocynaceae

Origin: Ukraine, SE Russia

Habitat: Variety of soils and conditions; woodlands, agricultural and natural fields/meadows.

Present in Vermont? yes

Method of Spread: wind blown seed dispersal, root crown sprouts

Status: Designated Plant Pest*
Invasive and Noxious Weeds in Vermont

*This listing means it is illegal to buy, sell, or transport this species in Vermont without a permit.

Native Plant Alternatives



Swamp Milkweed
(*Asclepias incarnata*):

Critically important food source for monarch butterflies. Flowers provide nectar for other native invertebrates.



Common Milkweed
(*Asclepias syriaca*):

Nature's mega food market; 450 insects are known to feed on some portion of the plant, including monarchs.

Invasive:



Pale Swallowwort



Common Look-alikes

Black Swallowwort



Honey Vine Milkweed



Distinguishing features

Flower: dark purple

Distinguishing features

Leaves: heart shape

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on VTinvasives.org and these additional resources: [Uconn-Extension-Pale-and-Black Swallowwort](#)

References: [University of Minnesota Extension](#) [Bugwoodcloud.org](#) [UConn Extension](#) [NY Invasive Species Info.](#) [UVM Extension](#)

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