

INVASIVE SPECIES



Dog-Strangling Vine (*Cynanchum louiseae*)

Dog-Strangling Vine is a perennial twining vine. Its leaves are opposite, oval in shape and pointed at the tips. It appears in the spring and flowers from June to July. The small, star-shaped flowers of Black Swallowwort are dark purple to black in colour with five petals. The petals exhibit hairs on their inner surfaces. Pale Swallowwort is nearly identical to Black Swallowwort but its flowers are lighter in colour, ranging from pale purple to reddish purple and lacking hairs in its petals. Dog-Strangling Vine has seedpods that are 4-8cm long and change from green to light brown as they mature. The level of light available directly affects the number of pods produced. Dog-Strangling Vine seeds are feathered which assists in wind dispersal.

The name Dog-Strangling Vine usually refers to Black (or Louis's) Swallowwort - *Cynanchum louiseae* (formerly known as both *Cynanchum nigrum* and *Vincetoxicum nigrum*) but it is also used to describe the very similar species Pale (or European) Swallowwort - *Cynanchum rossicum* (formally known as *Vincetoxicum*

rossicum). In Halton Region, Black Swallowwort is the most widespread and often encountered Dog-Strangling Vine species.

Concern

Dog-Strangling Vine is a threat to native biodiversity, forming large monospecific colonies that crowd out native vegetation. It tends to take advantage of disturbed areas and transportation corridors but is not restricted to these habitats. Once established, stands spread and strangle out native vegetation in other habitat types such as ravines, woodlots and old-fields (lands that were formerly cultivated or grazed but are now abandoned).

Distribution

Dog-Strangling Vine is very abundant in urban settings throughout Southern Ontario, establishing itself along roadsides, fence lines and in waste areas. More recently, it has also spread into more rural and natural environments.



Dog-Strangling Vine is abundant in urban settings



Acceptable Non-Native Vine: Trumpet Honeysuckle

Acceptable Native Vine: Virginia Creeper

Propagation

Dog-Strangling Vine propagates both through long distance seed dispersal and local rhizome growth. Colonies of Black Swallowwort have been known to produce 2,000 seeds per square metre in full sun.

Control

Possible control methods include: manual removal, cutting, and chemical treatment. Manual eradication can be effective on small populations if done in a very thorough manner. To successfully remove Dog-Strangling Vine, the full root must be dug out before the seeds ripen. If seeds are present, the plants should be burned on site or bagged and sent to a landfill to prevent further spread. Cutting back Dog-Strangling Vine will not eradicate this aggressive species but it can aid in reducing seed crop. Cutting is most effective when done in early or mid July before the seedpods mature. Chemical controls are also available but it can take multiple years to significantly reduce an established population.

Alternatives

Black Swallowwort was imported to North America from southern Europe as a garden ornamental in the late 1800s. Since that time, its aggressive weed-like nature has become apparent and its use as a garden plant has significantly diminished. However, if looking for a suitable garden alternative to Dog-Strangling Vine in Halton Region, the following is a list of alternative plants:

Acceptable Native Vines:

- Virginia Creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia)*
- Riverbank Grapevine (Vitis riparia)*
- Summer Grape (Vitis aestivalis)*
- Virgins Bower (Clematis virginiana)*

Acceptable Non-Native Vines:

- Trumpet Honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens)*
- Dutchman’s Pipe (Aristolochia macrophylla)*

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For more information on Dog-Strangling Vine and other Invasive Species contact Conservation Halton:

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