

# PROTECT URBAN HABITAT— STOP THE SPREAD!

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

**The Problem:** Black swallowwort is a fast growing vine that forms extensive patches, covering and smothering desirable plants. Seed pods disperse thousands of seeds in late July and early August.

Due to a similarity to milkweed, black swallow-wort attracts monarch butterflies which lay their eggs on the leaves. However, the leaves are toxic to the caterpillars.

**Description:** Black swallow-wort is an herbaceous perennial vine that gets 3-8 feet high. Leaves are dark green and shiny, 2-5 inches long, narrowly to broadly oval with pointed tips. Flowers are tiny and dark purple with 5 pointed, triangular petals. Seed pods are milkweed-like, slender and tapered. Seeds are on silky filaments and are dispersed by wind.



Pods and flower



Black swallow-wort growing up a fence.

**Management for Homeowners:** Dig plants with a trowel to get the entire root system. Place roots and pods into bags and dispose as trash before pods open. Do not put black swallow-wort roots or seed into yard waste bags or your compost as roots may re-grow and seeds will remain.

If you can't dig out the roots, pull the stems to weaken the plant over time. It will take repeated pulling to fully weaken and eradicate the plant.

Herbicide application is effective in killing the root system, but care must be taken to avoid exposure of desirable vegetation. Be sure to read and follow all label directions. Professional application is recommended for large infestations.