



Black Swallow-wort on the left. Pale swallow-wort on the right.

BCK CISMA

April 2019

APRIL SHOWERS BRING INVASIVE FLOWERS

April was full of showers...and flurries! Now it's time for May to bring all the flowers. Unfortunately, there is one small flower blooming soon that can cause an awful big headache—that of invasive swallow-wort.

There are two types of invasive swallow-worts present in the Barry-Calhoun-Kalamazoo area. Black swallow-wort, which is native to Europe, and pale swallow-wort, which is native to Russia and Ukraine. Both tolerate a range of light and soil conditions and are commonly found in forest, prairies and roadsides.

Swallow-wort is a vine that can reach up to six feet long. Its leaves are oval with pointed tips and straight edges. They have a smooth waxy coating and grow directly across from each other on the stem. When crushed swallow-wort has a pungent herbal smell. A distinguishing characteristic of swallow-wort is its star shaped flower, which is purple on black swallow-wort and pink on pale swallow-worts. The flowers bloom between June and August. Once in bloom swallow-wort will develop long seed pods, that resemble those of milkweed. The seed pods will split midsummer releasing wind-dispersed seeds.

Swallow-wort is detrimental to nearby plants, livestock and monarch butterflies. It will take over an area, climbing adjacent plant and eventually suffocating them. Its roots are toxic to any mammal that tries to graze on them. When a monarch butterfly lays eggs on swallow-wort the caterpillar will die from trying to consume its leaves.

The best management practice for swallow-wort is a foliar treatment. Improper chemical or treatment method will cause spread. Hand pulling, cutting and mowing stimulates sprouting from the root crown, leading to denser infestations. Burning swallow-wort improves germination. Removing seed pods will not slow the growth of existing swallow-wort, but it will prevent spread. Digging up the swallow-wort can be effective if the entire root crown is removed. Make sure all plant material is placed in a thick black plastic trash bag marked "invasive species". Set the bag in the sun for a week if possible to sterilize the plants prior to disposal. After a week or so, the bag can be sent to the landfill.

BCK CISMA this month in numbers

- 1** acre surveyed
- 1** active outreach events
- 100** impressions
- 18** passive outreach efforts
- 8693** impressions
- 1** publications with articles
- 30,000** impressions

Steering Committee Updates

The next BCK CISMA Steering Committee meeting is May 7th from 1-3pm at the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary Auditorium.

New Funding

BCK CISMA just received additional MISGP funding to implement Clean Boats, Clean Waters this summer!



Swallow-wort seed pods, with one that has opened.

BCK CISMA is dedicated to combating the threat of invasive species in Barry, Calhoun and Kalamazoo Counties. If you have invasive species concerns within those counties, please contact Fallon Januska at fallon.januska@macd.org or 269-908-4136.



Barry • Calhoun • Kalamazoo

BCKCISMA
Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area