

# UNWANTED

Dangerous to birds, butterflies, and native plants

## BLACK SWALLOW-WORT

Armed with seed pods that look like chili peppers, shiny green leaves that come in pairs, purple star-shaped flowers, and grappling spaghetti-like roots, this invasive non-native vine threatens monarch butterflies and songbirds and displaces native plant communities vital to insects, birds and other urban wildlife. Known to frequent chain-link fences, it is also found in woodlands and shrubs throughout Newton & surrounding neighborhoods – it has invaded and is spreading fast!

**Now that you know about it, you'll probably start to notice it everywhere you go.**

If you see it in your own yard:

- **DIG OUT THE ROOTS.** With a trowel or similar tool try to get the entire root system, **put it in a tied plastic bag and dispose of it in the trash. Do not put black swallow-wort into yard waste bags or in your compost!** The roots can resprout and seeds survive in compost.



- If you can't dig out the roots, you can pull the stems and leaves. It will regrow from the roots but you have weakened it. Return to pull it again. It won't survive if you keep pulling the stems and leaves.
- If you see seeds pods, pull them before they release their seeds. **Dispose of all pods in a tied plastic bag and put the bag in the trash. Do not put pods into yard waste bags or in your compost. THEY CAN GROW IF YOU DON'T DESTROY THEM.**

Contact Newton Conservators if you want to help us eradicate this plant in other places in Newton:  
[www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

**More information on other side.**

## IDENTIFYING THE PLANTS

**Leaves** shiny, green, come in pairs (i.e., the leaves are “opposite”, not “alternate”), quickly winding around fences and shrubs



**Flowers** small purple star-shaped



**Roots** white and fleshy tentacles that break off easily



**Seed Pods** pull when pods are still slim, smooth and green – before they open  
*Be careful pulling brown, papery pods that have already opened – mature seeds easily escape!*



## WHAT DAMAGE DO THESE PLANTS DO?

On a small scale, like in our yards and neighborhoods, black swallow-wort attracts monarch butterflies who lay their eggs on the leaves. The leaves are toxic to the caterpillars and a generation of butterflies is lost. Also, when the pods open, seeds quickly spread within your yard. Some of the seeds travel by wind to many other locations.

On a larger scale black swallow-wort can quickly cover meadows and other untended areas, smothering native plants that provide food for birds and other animals.

**For detailed information** go to:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/cylo1.htm>

A collaboration of the First Unitarian Society in Newton Environmental Committee and Newton Conservators