



Cooperative Extension



SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

PALE SWALLOW-WORT

(*Vincetoxicum rossicum* syn. *Cynanchum rossicum*)

A.K.A. "Dog Strangling Vine"

By Frances Lawlor and Susan Gwise

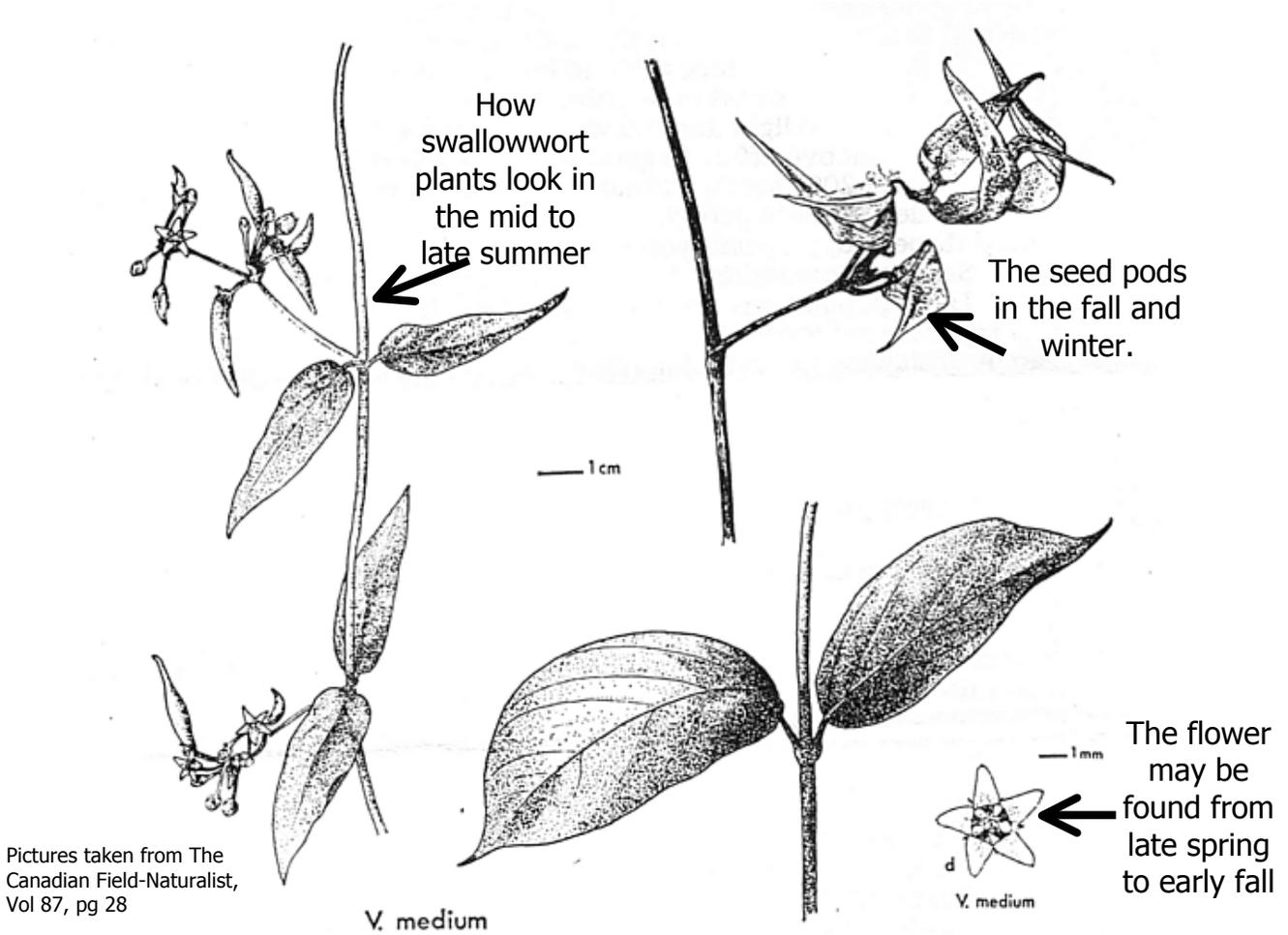
Identification: Pale swallow-wort is a member of the milkweed family. It is an herbaceous perennial vine, 2 to 6 feet in height. The leaves are opposite in arrangement, oval to wedge-shaped, with pointed tips. Generally, the leaves are 2.5 to 4.5" long and 2 to 2.75" wide. They are glossy and medium-green in color. In late summer, the leaves display a warm yellow color. The flowers are small and fleshy, with 5 pink to maroon colored petals. They are borne in loose clusters and are visible in late-May through mid-July. The fruit is a smooth, slender, pointed pod. The pods are light-green in color and are frequently borne in pairs. They are abundant during July and August. Like milkweed, the pods split open in late summer, disseminating large numbers of downy seeds.

Damage: Pale swallow-wort is a very aggressive non-native species that chokes out desirable species. It is problematic in Christmas tree plantations, perennial crops, pastures, roadsides, disturbed areas, and natural areas. It prefers limestone-based soils, and it is drought tolerant. Pale swallow-wort will thrive in a wide range of soil, moisture and light conditions. It will not tolerate wet areas. Pale swallow-wort can interfere with forest regeneration. The wind dispersed seeds are produced in large numbers and can travel a great distance. Once established, pure stands of pale swallow-wort suppress the establishment of other species. It also changes the microbial composition of the soil. Pale swallow-wort contains toxic substances; therefore, deer and other grazers will not eat it. Since it is a member of the milkweed family, monarch butterflies will lay their eggs on pale swallow-wort, but the larvae do not survive. Pale swallow-wort is not a turf weed, or a problem in annual crops.

Local Infestations: In Jefferson County, extremely large stands (100 to 500 acres, or more) of pale swallow-wort can be found on Grenadier Island, and Stony Point in the town of Henderson. It is also established in the townships of Adams, Antwerp, Brownville, Cape Vincent, Clayton, Ellisburg, Henderson, Lyme, Orleans, and on Fort Drum.

Control: *Prevention is the most effective control!* Once established, pale swallow-wort is difficult to control. Unfortunately, in New York State, no herbicides are labeled for use on pale swallow-wort, so there is no legal use of any herbicide against the plant. Until an herbicide is labeled for use against swallow-wort, we can only recommend mechanical controls. *It is very important to be extremely aggressive in eradicating this*

plant and to scout for any re-establishment of seedlings. Small patches of pale swallow-wort must be dug out by hand. The entire crown must be removed and destroyed. Large stands can be managed to prevent seed crops by mowing when pods are very small (early July). Large stands can also be cultivated on a yearly basis to achieve control over time. Stay out of pale swallow-wort areas during seed dispersal to prevent seed dissemination to unaffected areas. Likewise, clean boots, ATV's and other equipment when coming out of infested areas.



Please report any swallow-wort discoveries to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County at 315-788-8450. We are tracking the spread of this noxious weed in Jefferson County. If you have any questions about pale swallow-wort biology or control, contact Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County at 315-788-8450.