

Swallow-wort Management Suggestions for Central and Northern NY

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- **If you find swallow-wort, look for more.**
- **Stay out of any patch that is actively dispersing seeds, unless goal is to carefully harvest and destroy the seeds.**
- **Clean all machinery that has traveled through swallow-wort patches with maturing pods or that are dispersing seeds.**
- **Mechanical control for eradication**
 - Effective for eradication on a small scale if very thorough and dedicated. Complete root crown must be dug out before seeds ripen. Burn any plants bearing seeds.
 - Infested land might be brought under control by plowing and planting an annual crop until seed soil bank is depleted, possibly as long as 5 years.
 - Mowing, even several times a year, will not eradicate swallow-wort.
- **Mechanical control to prevent seed crop**

Cutting is most effective at preventing a mature seed crop if done in early to mid July, when there are small, immature pods on the plants. Cutting during the flowering period, before pod formation, will allow plants to recover and still produce a viable seed crop. Monitor mowed areas and mow a second time if pods reach mature size in late summer/early fall.

Hay cutters can contribute to the spread of swallow-wort if cutting is not timed correctly. Hay crops infested with swallow-wort and then sold off farm can be a means of introducing swallow-wort to new areas.
- **Chemical Control is the most effective means available to date for larger infestations. Persistence is needed for several years.**

Experience shows that systemic foliar sprays kill plants in the top layer of the infestation the first year. The next year, plants sheltered by that top foliage may be almost as dense as the first year and require almost as much herbicide. Herbicide amounts drop considerably in successive years, required for mostly spot spraying seedling recruits and small plants.

There are currently three general use herbicides allowed in New York State for use against swallow-wort: Roundup Pro, Ranger Pro (both glyphosate products) and Ortho MAX Poison Ivy and Tough Brush Killer (triclopyr). FIFRA "2ee" exemptions that allow this use are available from the Cornell Cooperative Extension. Garlon 4 Ultra is more effective at labeled rates than is Roundup Pro, but it is a restricted product now, so only certified applicators may purchase and use it. Production of Roundup Pro has been

discontinued, so it may not be available much longer, but Ranger Pro replaces it with the same active ingredient. The Ortho product may be obtained by homeowners at lawn and garden stores, and has the same active ingredient as Garlon 4 Ultra. More herbicide options may become available as herbicides are tested for effectiveness.

Applications should be made when plants are actively growing, after flowering has begun. **DO NOT SPRAY TOO SOON.** The temptation is to spray the plants as soon as they emerge in May. Waiting until the plants flower assures the plants are large enough to receive enough spray on the exposed leaf surface to deliver a killing dose to the roots.

Plants that are sprayed before pods form will probably not produce a viable seed crop that season. On the other hand, the herbicide is more effective later in the season. It would be best not to spray before July 1, and spraying may continue until the pods begin to open. Be patient. Systemic herbicides do not “burn down” plants. Within a week or two the plants will look sick. There may be dead tissue spots on most leaves and or a lot of yellowing leaves.

Do not waste herbicide, money or effort by spraying plants twice, especially if they look sick. Sick plants will not be able to effectively absorb the herbicide through the leaf surface or move the herbicide to the roots. Swallow-wort control may take a few years and it is important to not use more herbicide than is necessary.

It may not be possible to treat a complete area before pods begin to form. Mow plants that are in pod, but have not yet received herbicide application. Re growth will be rapid in summer. Spray the re growth, preferably in August or early September. In wooded areas that can not be mowed, cutting plants with pods by hand, just below the lowest pods, and spraying the re growth is also effective. Remove pod bearing plants from the site and destroy them.

If plants with mature pods are sprayed, be aware a seed crop may ripen. Plants with maturing pods may still leave a viable seed crop, but you may kill the parent, so that it can't continue to produce a seed crop in the future. Expect that it may extend the treatment program another year or two. Continue searching for new infestations.

- **Swallow-wort management schedule for Central and Northern New York**

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
search for new infestations	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
dig out complete root crowns, destroy	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
mow plants with young pods			•	•			
destroy plants with plump pods			•	•	•		
stay out of patches with ripe pods			•	•	•	•	•
apply foliar herbicide spray			•	•			
hygiene during seed dispersal- clean equipment, shoes and clothing			•	•	•	•	•

