

June 2012 Guess that Plant



The June 2012 *Guess that Plant* was ***Cynanchum louiseae* Kartesz and Gandhi,**
Black Swallow-wort

June's *Guess that Plant* was black swallow-wort, formerly known as *Cynanchum nigrum* (L.) Pers or *Vincetoxicum nigrum* (L.) Moench. This plant is a perennial vine from the Old World with thick, opposite ovate leaves. Flowers are axial and expressed in small umbels of dark purple flowers created by odd shaped 5-petaled corollas. The plant prefers disturbed sites and it is often identified in railroad beds, road side riprap and other rocky structures where competition is at a minimum.

The vine is widely distributed within New Jersey's developed landscape. Mary Hough (1983) did not list the plant but the species has been in New Jersey for decades apparently with few collections. I knew the vine as early as 1975 from the former Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore line (Conrail) railroad bed that runs through south central Camden Count. Recent observations have been made in the urban and suburban areas of Camden, Burlington, and Ocean counties. Black Swallow-wort reaches its southern limits of distribution in New Jersey. It is found west in Maryland but has not been recorded for the Delmarva Peninsula according to Kartesz (1999).

New Jersey botanists can expect to find this plant flowering in June and producing twin long follicles so characteristic to the milkweed family in which it is aligned.

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