



Elderberry

Minimum Spacing: 3-6'

Height: 6-12'

Spread: 6-12'

Light: prefers full sun

Shade: tolerates partial shade

Moisture: likes moisture, tolerates drought

PH: prefers neutral; tolerates alkaline

Pollination: requires cross-pollination (plant 2 or more near ea other)

Harvest begins at: 2-4 years

Interesting Growing Considerations: heavy animal/insect feeder, attracts hummingbirds, highly medicinal, showy in spring and fall, easy to duplicate, can be grown as a hedge or living fence

Overview: This shrub is a member of the honeysuckle family and grows up to about 13 ft. high, with smooth gray bark. Corky bumps cover the slender branches, and there's a spongy, white pith inside the twigs and branches. The opposite, feather-compound leaves may be over 3 feet long.

Planting: Elderberry grows in large dense stands. With a rhizomatous root system, they shoot off new plants from the roots and spread fast over the span of a few years; prune new shoots for a more tree like form. They are often found in moist places like marshes, riverbanks, roadsides, and in moist woods and thickets, but can tolerate clay soil. Plant them in areas with good soil drainage because this plant is going to want to be watered often. Space the plants about 5 feet apart, only a couple inches deep due to their shallow root system. Make sure to fertilize this plant with natural organic materials like compost, in their early life, until they are well established. When the Elderberry begin to flower and fruit, they will cross pollinate and pull nutrients from the soil around them. Once the shrub begins to flower and fruit, you can take prune stems, place them in a jar of water in a sunny window, and watch the stems grow roots. You can then place that cutting into the ground and double your elderberry population!

Harvests & Uses: In late Spring/early Summer, the elder bears tiny, crunched, white, lacy flowers in flat-topped to slightly rounded clusters (panicles) that spread over 6 inches across. Later in fall, tiny, spherical, juicy purple-black to black, seedy berries form hardly more than 1/8th inch across. They grow in branched clusters, like the flowers, ripening from midsummer to early fall, in quantities that weigh down the branches. The elderberry is known for its strong medicinal qualities and nutritional value. Collect both flowers and berries for medicinal/nutritional and food purposes.

For food, both the flower (tea) and berries (syrup, tea, wine, jams, tinctures) are edible and medicinal. The elderberry's flower bunches (elderflower) can be harvested in full bloom in spring, and the elderberry's berry bunches (elderberries) can be harvested when they are dark purple-black. Elderflowers should be dried upside down, stored in airtight container like a jar, then used for tea. Elderberries can be used raw for syrups, tea, wine, jams, and tinctures, or can be dried for tea.

As a medicine, the elderberry is classically known for its strong ability to stop the progression of viral and bacterial infections, so it's great for the flu, colds, coughs, and sinus infections. It also has anti-inflammatory, antihistamine, and analgesic properties. Berries provide very large amounts of potassium and beta-carotene, as well as sugar and fruit acids, calcium, phosphorus and Vitamin C.