

Did You Know?



Elderberry, *Sambucus* spp.

- Elderberry has been used by virtually every human culture and cultivated since about 2000 B.C.E. The medicinal properties of elderberry were well known by the time of Pliny the Elder (77 C.E), a Roman author, naturalist and natural philosopher.
- Historically, elderberries were known as “the medicine chest of the country people” to cure just about anything! And the flowers have been esteemed globally since prehistoric times.
- Modern research suggests that elderberry has diuretic and immune system-stimulating properties, is anti-inflammatory and antiviral.
- The Romans created hair dye made from the dark juice of the berries.
- The fine-grained wood polishes easily and has been used historically to make combs, skewers for butchers, pegs for shoemakers, needles for weaving musical instruments and toys.
- According to the Harry Potter book series, elder wands are said to be the most powerful wand that ever existed and can do magic that is impossible for other magic wands, such as mending another magic wand.
- Many magical legends surround the elderberry tree. Including keeping vampires at bay by putting elderberries on the windowsills. The vampire’s compulsive need to count all the berries will keep them occupied until dawn.
- Native Americans used the elderberry to heal the body, mind and spirit through the gifts of medicines, foods, beverages, baskets, charms, ceremonial items, inks, dyes, and body paint, jewelry, hunting whistles and musical instruments. They also made insecticides and fish poisons.
- Two primary types of elderberry are American elderberry, *Sambucus nigra* spp. *canadensis*, native to North America and the Black European elderberry, *Sambucus nigra*, native to Europe. They thrive in full sun to part shade, consistently moist and fertile soils but will tolerate periods of both drought and wet soil.
- The flowers and fruit are edible and used to make pies, jellies, syrups, teas, wines, elixirs, and dyes. Caution must be taken to only use the cooked ripe berries to avoid the toxic cyanogenic glycosides (CNGs) present in unripe berries, stems, leaves and possibly the seeds. CNGs break down into cyanide

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America, Inc. not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.