

ELDERBERRY

Sambucus canadensis

A large arching and irregularly broad-rounded deciduous shrub



Description: A bushy, multi-stemmed, wide spreading shrub with deciduous compound leaves. Often found forming dense thickets, a result of suckering from the roots. The star shaped fragrant creamy white flowers are tiny, but arranged in showy sprays up to 10 in across. The flat-topped circular flower clusters can be very abundant, often covering the whole plant. Black-purplish berries persist after flowering.

Natural Habitat: Forest or natural areas in moist, open woods; weedy in disturbed areas in fields, roadsides, ditches

Size: 10 - 15 feet

Growth Rate: Fast

Light: Full sun to partial shade

Planting and Care: Grows in acidic or alkaline moist soils but is moderately drought tolerant. It can be pruned back hard to keep it in bounds.

Ornamental Value: When planted in a large mass whether in bloom, in fruit, or even just decked out in their pretty lacy foliage, makes a very ornamental planting.

Landscape Usage: best in the naturalized or wildlife garden, in wet areas of the landscape, and along roads.

Commercial/Traditional Uses: The flowers are used to make elderflower water used in perfumes and confectioneries. The flowers are also edible and used in jams, jellies and are the basis of elderflower fritters. Native Americans made much use of the American elder. They used the bark, flowers and fruits for medicines; they made cakes, puddings and breads from the berries; and they made nonalcoholic and alcoholic drinks from the berries. **CAUTION: Bark, root, leaves and unripe berries are toxic; said to cause cyanide poisoning, severe diarrhea. Berries edible when cooked. Flowers not thought to be toxic**

Wildlife Benefits: The berries are relished by no fewer than 50 kinds of birds and attractive to bees, butterflies.