



**Plant of the Month**  
By Patrick Fast, Alkemist Labs, Jan. 2021

**History**

Elder seeds found in Switzerland were dated to 2000B.C.E., suggesting that they were cultivated at that time. Pliny the Elder and Dioscorides both noted the medicinal qualities of Elderberry.



**Use/Benefit**

Elderberries contain natural substances called flavonoids. They seem to help reduce swelling, fight inflammation, and boost the immune system.

Limited studies have found that elderberry eases flu symptoms like fever, headache, sore throat, fatigue, cough, and body aches. Common forms of administration include syrup and lozenges, often paired with Zinc. The anthocyanin profile of Elderberry includes: cyanidin-3-O-sambubioside-5-O-glucoside, cyanidin-3-O-sambubioside, and cyanidin-3-O-glucoside.

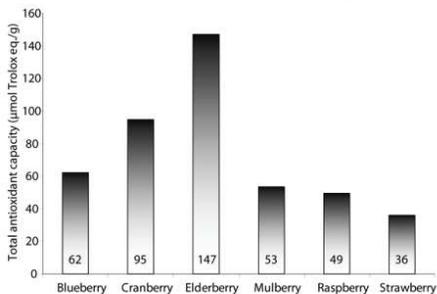


*Sambucus nigra*  
Elderberry Fruit

...and *S. canadensis*, and *S. cerula*

**Botanical Characteristics**

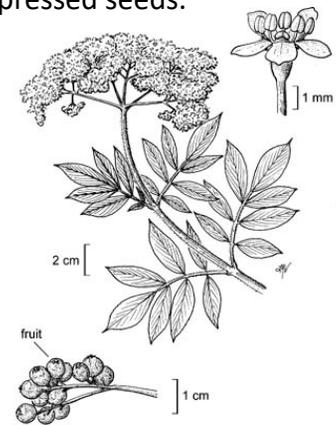
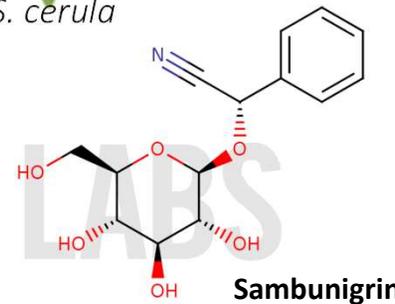
Deciduous shrub or more rarely a small tree to 10 m, branches often arching. Leaves pinnate; leaflets, ovate, ovate-lanceolate or ovate-elliptic; acuminate; serrate. Inflorescence flat-topped, 10–20 cm diameter, corymbose with 5 primary rays. Flowers 5-merous, actinomorphic. Fruit a drupe, globose, black, rarely greenish, containing 3–5 compressed seeds.



**Fig. 3.** Total antioxidant capacity of various small fruits as measured using the ORAC method. [ORAC = Oxygen Radical absorbance Capacity. In this example, elderberry is the American subspecies. Adapted from: (Wu et al. 2004a).

**Pharmacology/Toxicity**

All plant parts except for flowers and ripe fruits contain the cyanogenic glycoside Sambunigrin, highlighting the importance of safe use of herbal preparations. Not recommended for children or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.



*Sambucus nigra* subsp. *caerulea*  
Adoxaceae  
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