



General Information about Elderberries

- Widest range of all small fruits; northern Quebec, Canada to South America.
- Native to Eastern North America
- European elderberry is *sambucus nigra*
- American elderberry is *sambucus canadensis*
- Height can be as much as 10 feet in northern regions to 15 feet in southern
- European elderberry can live 25 years. It is believed American is similar.

Planting

- Elderberry prefers a heavy soil high in organic material.
- Soil pH should be 5.5 and 7.5
- Elderberry can be grown from seeds, cuttings, suckers or rhizomes.
- Most new plantings are established with root cuttings and will have a crop the second year.
- Plantings establish by seed will take 3-4 years to produce a crop.
- Root cuttings should be taken when the plant is dormant.
- Cuttings should be 6-8 inches and contain three to five buds each.
- Cuttings should be placed in growing media in late January or February to be ready to plant in spring.
- New roots will appear on cuttings within two weeks. Cuttings should be grown in the green house 6-8 weeks before field planting.
- Cuttings should be set 4 to 5 feet apart with rows 10-12 feet apart to allow equipment to move between the rows.

 Plantings can be done from early spring through June, but late plantings will have little first year growth.

 Does best with ample moisture and thrive even under poor drainage. Will grow in swamps, bogs and does well in transition zones between wetlands and upland.

 Will tolerate short periods of flooding, but not long periods.

 Production will be maximized in plantings with full sun.

 Rooted cuttings should be planted slightly below the collar and the soil tamped.

 Planting during dormant periods is best.

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 New plantings need .6 to one inch of water per week

Growing

 Elderberries are among the first plants to leaf out in the spring, as early as late February in Missouri.

 Late spring frost rarely affects elderberry production.



- o Pollination usually occurs through wind, insects play a minor roll in pollination.

 Fruiting mainly occurs on the terminal portion of one and two year-one canes.

 In Missouri, full flowering occurs in mid-June.

 Berries ripen from green to red to black with a hint of purple.

 Berries ripen over a period of 6-8 weeks.

 Berry size is 3/16 to ¼ inch.

 Water requirements are one inch per week during the growing season and more during drought and fruit ripening.

 Elderberry plants are shallow rooted, thus, moisture and nutrients are received in the top few inches of soil.

Fertilizing

 Use 10-10-10, apply 4oz per age of the plant, not to exceed one pound per plant.

 Apply fertilize in the early spring at about leaf out, late February.



Additional N, up to one pound of ammonium nitrate per plant, can be applied in late May to early June.

Pruning



There are three recommended pruning methods: 1) selectively remove dead and undesirable canes each year; 2) remove all canes near ground level every other year; 3) remove all canes annually near ground level when the plant is dormant.



Removing all canes spurs vigorous new growth and results in a shorter window for fruit ripening. Canes produce fewer, but very large clusters



Selective pruning results in a longer period of harvest and many small clusters



Production will increase rapidly the first three years



Browsing by deer can decrease production significantly.



Birds and small animals are attracted to the elderberry fruit

Harvesting



The entire cluster is cut off at harvest.



Berries should be processed shortly after harvest to preserve quality



Stems should be removed; this can be done before or after berries are frozen



Berries then go through a press to remove the juice.