

**1212
Elderberries**

Elderberries are native shrubs that produce fruit used in jellies, pies and wine. The fruit is seedy and tart, but high in vitamin C. These shrubs also are used for landscaping and wildlife habitat. Elderberries are upright, spreading shrubs that grow six to twelve feet high. Their leaves are opposite and compound with five to eleven leaflets, similar to green and white ash trees. The leaves also have serrated margins.

[](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1212f1a.html)Their showy, white flower-clusters generally are six-to-ten inches in diameter and have a pleasant fragrance. The fruit is a smooth globular berry that measures three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. The broad, flat clusters of berries, which ripen in early August to late September, are deep purple to black. Some elderberries are partially self-fruitful and generally show increased fruit-set when two or more cultivars are planted in close proximity. Many birds and mammals feed on the fruit.

Elderberries are drought and cold tolerant. They also tolerate almost any moisture condition and soil type. They grow at a pH of 5.5 to 7.5, but [](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1212f2a.html)prefer a pH of 5.5 to 6.5. It's important to cultivate around these shrubs carefully, because the root system is shallow and can easily be damaged. Elderberries have few pests, and natural predators often control any outbreaks.

Plant elderberries five to seven feet on center to accommodate good air circulation. Plant bare root stock or rooted cuttings in early spring and container-grown plants anytime during the growing season.