

Sambucus nigra

COMMON NAME

Elder, elderflower, elderberry

FAMILY

Adoxaceae

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

NVS CODE

SAMNIG

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not assessed

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of coastal and lowland habitats (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). The plant occurs in scrub and forest margin and modified plant communities (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

FEATURES

Shrub or small tree to approx. 6m high. Stems grey, strongly lenticellate; vegetative shoots with thick white pith. Leaflets 5~7, dark purple when very young, soon green. Petiole to around 7cm long on flowering branches, mostly hairy. Petiolules hairy; lateral petiolules < 1cm long; terminal petiolule > 1cm long. Lamina of terminal leaflet 4.5~11 x 3.5~6cm, broad-elliptic to broad-ovate, glabrous, or hairy on veins beneath and on midrib above, serrate except towards base; apex acute to cuspidate. Lamina of lateral leaflets smaller and narrower. Infl. a large flat corymb, mostly 10~20cm across, glabrous or nearly so, with slender peduncles and pedicels which usu. become red or purple at fruiting, or occasionally remain green. Flowers foetid. Calyx .5mm long. Corolla white; lobes 2.5~3mm long, broad-elliptic. Stamens < corolla. Fruit 4~8.5mm diam., globose or subglobose, usu. shining black, occasionally green. Pyrenes approx. 3mm long, ovoid-oblong, rugose. (-Webb et. al., 1988)

SIMILAR TAXA

Elder is a shrub or small tree (Porteus 1993).

FLOWERING

November, December, January

FLOWER COLOURS

White

YEAR NATURALISED

1867

ORIGIN

Eur, W Asia, N Africa

ETYMOLOGY

nigra: Black



Sambucus nigra. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Sambucus nigra. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

Reason For Introduction

Ornamental

Life Cycle Comments

Perennial.

Seed

Seed is produced (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Seeds are 'short-lived' in the seed bank (Atkinson 1997).

Dispersal

Seed is dispersed by birds (Timmins & MacKenzie, 1995; John Barkla, pers. comm.).

Tolerances

The plant is intolerant of shade (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Requires medium to high soil fertility (Atkinson 1997).

Poisonous plant:

The black berries can cause stomach upsets if eaten raw.

Foraging for elderflower

Click on the Radio New Zealand National logo to listen to This Way Up. Simon Morton interviews Johanna Knox about foraging for elderflower (duration: 12'15")

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/sambucus-nigra/>