

# AMERICAN ELDERBERRY

A FORGOTTEN NATIVE PLANT



American Elderberries are a wonder of nature, a **true superfood** with 3 times the antioxidant level of blueberries<sup>1</sup>, and a greater variety of **antioxidants** than European Elderberries<sup>2</sup>.

Ohio Elderberry Farm Syrup is made from American Elderberries. We grow elderberries on our farm in Adams County (1hr east of Cincinnati). Berries are frozen the same day they are harvested to lock in the nutrients. Then we simmer them, strain out the pulp and stir in local honey. Voila!

What do I do with it?

1. Take a small shot or sip daily
2. Mix a tablespoon into your favorite fizzy water to make an elderberry soda
3. Stir into yogurt
4. Blend into a smoothie
5. Top a scoop of vanilla ice cream
6. Mix with vodka - shaken or stirred
7. Combine with vinegar or hot sauce to glaze roasted meat
8. Add a spoonful to your Earl Grey, Chamomile or other favorite tea
9. Dribble on cheesecake
10. It's a little thin to put on pancakes, but it's been done!

Is it good for me?

Elderberry has long been used as an herbal medicine, and is widely used as such by many today. However, elderberry as a medicine has not been subjected to thorough and rigorous scientific study. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) state "*Some preliminary research suggests that elderberry may relieve symptoms of flu or other upper respiratory infections*"<sup>3</sup>.

Why do we grow and use American Elderberry ourselves?

- High in antioxidants
- Scientific studies supporting effectiveness against cold symptoms
- Great flavor
- Important plant for pollinators

<sup>1</sup> Haytowitz, et al. USDA Database for the Flavonoid Content of Selected Foods. Release 3.3. March 2018..

<sup>2</sup> Sidor, et al. Advanced research on the antioxidant and health benefit of elderberry (Sambucus nigra) in food – a review. Journal of Functional Foods Volume 18, Part B, October 2015, Pages 941-958.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/elderberry>

- Personal experience of my own use and health
- Anecdotal evidence from other people that it has helped them stay well
- Beautiful color
- Long used in traditional/herbal medicine
- Native to Ohio
- I can grow it myself! (and so can you - ask me how!)

## How does it grow?

These native shrubs grow on roadsides, on the edges of woods, fields and streams. You have undoubtedly seen elderberry bushes. It's easiest to find them when their huge umbrels of white flowers bloom in July. Berries emerge in late July/early August and are harder to spot (plus the birds love them). The scientific name for the variety that is native to Ohio is *Sambucus nigra subspecies canadensis*.

We grow cultivated varieties that have been selected over the generations for bigger berries, clusters that ripen all at the same time, disease-resistance, etc. Right now our favorites are Nova, Adams and York. We're waiting to see how Wyldewood, Bob Gordon and Ranch do for us. As of Fall 2021, we have about 500 bushes growing - each of which should produce 5-7 pounds of fruit once they are mature.

## Food

Elderberry was used as food and medicine among early Native American nations and European settlers. In fact, elderberry seeds have been found in human coprolites (fossilized feces) dating back 5000 yrs<sup>4</sup>. Now many people use elderberries for juice, wine, tea, jam, pie, and pemmican. And don't forget that Harry and Meghan chose a lemon elderflower cake for their wedding cake<sup>5</sup>!

## Ecosystem

Elderberries provide food and habitat for birds and serve as host plants for insects, including our country's largest moth, *Hyalophora cecropia* Linnaeus. It also provides erosion control on slopes, and turns carbon dioxide into the oxygen that animals (like us) breathe.

It's a good-for-you, good-for-the-earth native plant that may have medicinal benefits. What's not to love!?! Order online at [muckybootsfarm.com](http://muckybootsfarm.com) or find us at a local market.



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<sup>4</sup> Kavasch, E. "Ethnobotany of Elderberry" in Herb Society of America's Essential Guide to Elderberry Ed: Brobst, J. 2013. p14.

<sup>5</sup> Gonzales, E. What is Elderflower? Everything to Know About Prince Harry and Megan Markle's Wedding Cake Flavor, Harper's Bazaar, 3/20/2018.