

Ohio ELDERBERRY PLANTING GUIDE

QUICK-START PLANTING GUIDE

Store cuttings in refrigerator until ready to plant.

Prepare your planting spot. Remove weeds from ground and amend soil, or prep pot with growing medium.

When ready to plant, identify the bottom nodes on your cutting. These are the nodes just above the slanted cut. Plant the cutting in the soil, slanted side down, with the nodes buried 2-3" underground.

Water cutting and apply mulch.

DETAILED PLANTING GUIDE

STORE YOUR CUTTINGS

Leave the cuttings in their plant bag and store them in the refrigerator until ready to plant. If possible, put them in the coldest part of the refrigerator. You don't want them to freeze but you want them to remain quite cold. The cuttings have a damp paper towel (damp with water) in the bag to help them retain moisture. If the towel starts to mold or dry out, just discard it and place a fresh damp paper towel in the bag.



PREPARE FOR PLANTING

If Planting in the Ground: Prepare your planting hole. Remove weeds/grasses. Work in compost or aged manure, if available. If you wish to pamper your plants, you can take a soil sample and have it analysed by a lab. They can tell you how you to amend your soil to make it most hospitable for elderberries. Many plants prefer a more acidic or more alkaline soil. Elderberries prefer a slightly acidic soil (5.5-6.5), but can grow and produce in a wider range. I have used Spectrum Analytic (<https://spectrumanalytic.com/>) for this work, but there are other soil labs out there. From my experience, the cost is ca \$30-40 per sample.

PREPARE FOR PLANTING (continued)

If Planting in a Pot: For elderberry, a bigger pot/plant bag is better, since the roots will often move laterally. However, a smaller pot can work if you are transplanting them into the ground in a few months. Even if you wish to start in a pot, you will want to transplant your elderberry to the ground eventually.

For a growing medium, you can use a commercial potting mix, or make your own with peat/coconut coir/vermiculite/compost or other inputs. The goal is to make sure your pot can drain (without drainage holes the elderberry cuttings will rot), but that the potting medium can retain enough moisture to for the roots to develop. I think starting in a pot is a tad more difficulty because the moisture balance is trickier to maintain than if you plant in the ground.

PLANT!

When ready to plant, take a moment to look at your cuttings. Make sure you can distinguish the nodes from the lenticils. The nodes are circular, paired and may contain leaf buds or swelling. The lenticils (or breathing holes) are linear and scattered the length of the cutting. Hold the cutting with the slanted side towards the ground. The bottom nodes are those just above the slanted cut. Plant the cutting slanted side pointed down, so that the bottom nodes are buried 2-3" underground. Some growers choose to dip the bottom nodes in rooting hormone before planting. though I haven't found this necessary.

WATER

Water cutting and mulch with woodchips, cardboard etc. Plant additional cuttings 4-6' apart in the row.

The above is my experience/opinion. See what others have to say in the resources below.

OTHER RESOURCES

From **River Hills Harvest**, a Missouri farm that is considered a leader in elderberry farming:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hKt69A0B39xSFQEas8azVVTuHsNILjCW/edit>

From **University of Vermont**: This is a good all around guide to growing elderberries. Pages 8-9 include cultivar descriptions that are difficult to find elsewhere.
<https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/ElderberryGuideComplete.pdf>