

Sambucus nigra, s. Canadensis
Family: *Adoxaceae (Viburnaceae)*
Parts Used: flower, berry

Elder is one of the two for ones, giving the healing power of the flower in the summer and the illness fighting power of the berry in the fall, just in time for winter. I refer to elder as the Illness Herb, because it is used for whatever may ail you. Super powerful in combination with echinacea.

Properties

Berries: alterative, anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, diaphoretic, diuretic, expectorant, laxative, aperient, anti-rheumatic, antiviral, antioxidant, nutritive.
Flowers: alterative, anti-inflammatory, diaphoretic, diuretic (cold infusion), demulcent, anti-catarrhal, anti-spasmodic, febrifuge, aperient, vulnerary

Energetics: cooling, drying, sweet (berry), bitter (flower)
Systems Affected: immune, respiratory, mucus membranes

Uses

- Promote and support immunity for illness, cold, flu, etc.
- Respiratory congestion, infection, inflammation, etc.
- Sinusitis, nasal discharge, drainage, etc.
- Wounds, bruises, burns, swellings, etc.
- Upset stomach, nausea, constipation, etc.
- Gum disease, mouth sores, cold sore, infection, etc.

Flower

- Clears heat from the body, promotes sweating to clear “channels”
- Fevers, cold, and flu with accompanying symptoms (hot tea)
- Respiratory and sinus issues, sore throat (cold tea)
- Allergies and hay fever
- Earache, headache
- Helps reduce excessive amount of mucus, restores balance
- Eyes: sore, strained, leaky, inflammation, infection (cold)
- Mouth sores, gum disease, cold sores
- Blood cleanser
- Skin care: clears, moistens, softens, balanced complexion
- Bruises, burns, swelling, rashes, etc.
- Sunburn, night sweats and hot flashes (compress or spritz with cold tea)

- "...for a dozen miseries"

Berry

- Antiviral; strengthens cell walls, inhibits viral penetration into cells, interferes with virus replication which can reduce duration of illness and aid in prevention
- Nutritive; antioxidants, vitamins A and C, iron, etc.
- Tonic for illness prevention and treatment
- Viruses of all types; flu, herpes, shingles, etc.
- Enhances immune system function
- Lung and sinus congestion, tonsilitis, sore throat, etc.
- Blood building and cleansing
- Cardiovascular tonic; strengthen arteries and capillaries
- Inflammatory conditions; joints, bowels, etc.

Herb Preparations

- Tincture, vinegar
- Syrup, honey
- Herbal oil, salve, cream (flowers)
- Tea and herbal drinks (flowers only steep for about 3-5 minutes)
- Compress (flowers)
- Poultice (all parts can be used)
- Bath, foot soak, face steam
- Toner, face wash, gargle (flowers)
- Food: jams, jellies, preserves, pies, soda, or juice

Care/Harvesting

Deciduous shrub can get up to 30 feet. Found in streambanks, open flats, and valleys. Loves moist, fertile, and well-drained soil.

- Propagate from a cutting or purchase a transplant from the nursery. Space 5-6 feet apart. Pollination is stronger if you plant two shrubs.
- Keep roots moist, although elder will still survive if it gets dry and hot.
- To harvest the flowers, pick on a dry, sunny day when fully open. They should smell lemony and fresh. Pick the whole head of flowers and dry or use fresh, remove completely from the stem.
- Berries are ripe when they look almost black in color and juicy, usually around August and September. They need to be prepared immediately or dried with gentle heat (dehydrator on low). Remove fully from stems with a fork or fingers.

Safety

Raw, ripe berries can cause upset stomach, so it is best to cook or dry them before use. The leaves and bark can be toxic, but when used under professional care can be a strong antiviral for SARS and coronavirus.