

Sambucus nigra

COMMON NAME

elder, elderflower, elderberry

FAMILY

Adoxaceae

AUTHORITY

Sambucus nigra L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

SAMNIG

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

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).

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. Seed is produced (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Seeds are 'short-lived' in the seed bank (Atkinson 1997). Seed is dispersed by birds (Timmins & MacKenzie, 1995; John Barkla, pers. comm.).



Sambucus nigra. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Sambucus nigra. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

YEAR NATURALISED

1867

ORIGIN

Eur, W Asia, N Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

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

ETYMOLOGY

nigra: Black

POISONOUS PLANT

The black berries can cause stomach upsets if eaten raw.

MORE INFORMATION

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