



Project BudBurst

A National Phenology Network Field Campaign for Citizen Scientists



www.budburst.org

Common Name: Blue elder, Elderberry, Blue elderberry, American elder, wild elder

Scientific Name: *Sambucus mexicana*, *Sambucus niger*, *Sambucus caerulea*

Plant Family: Caprifoliaceae

Identifying Characteristics:

Size: The elderberry is 2 to 8 m tall (6 to 24 ft)

Leaves: Pinnately compound with 3-9 leaflets per leaf; the leaflets are oval to elliptical, smooth-surface or hairy, with a highly pointed tip and often with an asymmetrical base. The margins of the leaflets are serrated. Leaves are deciduous.

Flowers: Flowers are white or cream-colored, small, and borne in terminal clusters (4 to 33 cm in diameter) that bear dozens to hundreds of flowers. The flower is radially symmetrical and 5-lobed.

Bark: The bark of mature trees is dark and rough.

Habitat: Common, particularly in stream banks, riverside woodlands, and in open areas in the forest understory. Although elderberry's preferred habitats are the bottoms of canyons where water persists longest during the summer, it is also often found on dry hillsides.

Bloom time: Flowers from May – September

Information sources:

Math/Science Nucleus: <http://msnucleus.org> and <http://msnucleus.org/watersheds/mission/trees.html>; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Did you know? The flowers develop into blue berries which are an important source of food for birds and mammals. The blue berries were also dried and preserved for eating by Native Americans, and used by the early California immigrants to make jam and wine.



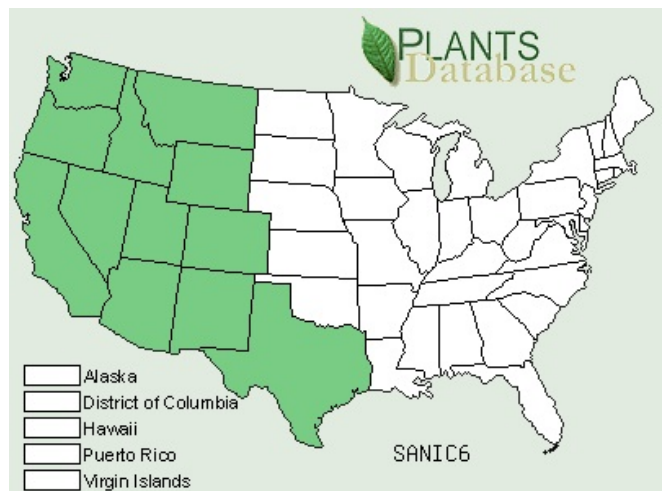
Photograph by William & Wilma Follette, USDA-NRCS, 1992. Western wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species, West Region, Sacramento, CA. Courtesy of USDA-NRCS West and Science Institute.



Photograph by J.S. Peterson, USDA-NRCS NPDC, USA, AZ. The Arboretum at Flagstaff, July 14, 2001.

Phenological observation:
Budburst/First Leaf, First Flower

Distribution Area:



Map courtesy of USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (plants.usda.gov)