

4 Delicious Elderberry Recipes

Whether an old hand or a novice, you'll find The Old-Fashioned Fruit Garden (Skyhorse Publishing, 2012) by Jo Ann Gardner enlightening and informative, not to mention enjoyable. Get back to the basics and learn how to grow, cook and preserve small fruits. In this excerpt from the aptly titled section "Elderberries," Gardner discusses her experience with elderberries and shares some of her favorite elderberry recipes.

You can purchase this book from the Mother Earth Living store: [The Old-Fashioned Fruit Garden](#).

Delicious Elderberry Recipes

- [Spiced Elderberry Jelly recipe](#)
- [Elderberry Wine recipe](#)
- [Elderflower Fritters recipe](#)
- [Elderberry Pie recipe](#)

Grow This Fruit-Garden Favorite

The elderberry often occupied a favored spot in the old-fashioned fruit garden—perhaps a corner where it could grow undisturbed, its branches spreading to 8 feet when laden with fruit, the plant itself growing about 12 feet under good conditions. In early July, the glorious elderblossoms, or elderblow, were picked for wine and jelly making. The buds were pickled, the florets were shaken into pancake and muffin batters to lighten and sweeten them. Later in the season, before the first frosts of autumn, the clusters of shiny purple-black fruit were picked mainly for wine making, although elderberry jelly and pie were also looked on with great favor. The experienced cook knew just where to find the hard sour green apples that, when combined with elderberries, made a firm, flavorful jelly. (Unlike many other small fruits, elderberries do not contain much natural pectin.) Large trays of ripe elderberries were set out in the sun to dry so that elderberry pie could be enjoyed throughout the winter.

When the creamy white umbels of elderflowers bloom, as giant saucers, they seem to embody the characteristics of summer—long sweet-scented sunny days. Then later, some time before the first frost, the ripening clusters of dark berries remind us that shorter days, cold nights, and the end of the growing season are close at hand. Even if you never harvest a single flower or berry, you may enjoy growing the elderberry bush just to look at it. *Sambucus canadensis*, the elderberry of the old-fashioned fruit garden, grows wild in thickets all across Canada and the United States. Beware, though. If you gather elderberries in the wild, do not confuse the purple-black berry with the red variety, *S. pubens*, which blossoms and fruits earlier. The red berries, reputedly, are inedible, though birds do enjoy them. Luckily, cultivated elderberries, including European varieties (*S. nigra*) and ornamental types that bear significantly, are widely available from plant nurseries. There are several ornamental varieties in my garden that are wonderful landscaping shrubs, including Black Lace (with pink flowers) and golden elderberry, a heavy bearer. Modern breeding has made elderberries even more attractive for preserving by enlarging the berries and shortening the ripening time of some varieties—Nova, for example. Elderberries are hardy, easy to grow, and adaptable to a wide range of soils and growing conditions. If you have the space, they certainly deserve to be grown in your fruit garden. High in vitamin C, the berries' reputed health benefits are similar to black currants.

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