



Health from the Root to the Flower

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Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra L.*) is one of the oldest medicinal plants. All parts could be usefully applied in phytotherapy. It is usually used as a dried drug, and its healing power is enhanced in a mixture herbs. Leaves are collected before flowering. Flowers with wonderful fragrance are collected from May to June. They are the most famous parts of this species for preparing tea. Young sprouts provide bark for medicinal uses. A toxic substance, sambunigrine, occurs in immature fruits of elderberry, but it is possible to deactivate it by higher temperature. Attention has to be paid in use of extracts from bark and roots of elder. Study of this species is necessary because not all components and their therapeutical effects are known in this modern age.

Toxic proto-cyanides are found in unripe berries of black elder, as noted, as well as in the twigs, leaves, bark and roots. Truly ripe berries are safe, and each person's sensitivity to sambunigrine varies, as is common with many plants. Thus, the preparation of elderberry products must eliminate stems and unripe berries.

River Hills Harvest Elderberry Producers developed a mechanical de-stemmer operated in water to separate the stems from berries and float off unripe berries, chaff, bits of leaves, stems, etc. Moderate heating is required by the FDA, thus River Hills Harvest brand products are heated to 180 degrees F and kept there for about four minutes. The combination of these two steps provides a good example of how to safely process elderberry fruit products. Elder flowers are either dried or frozen before use as in food, teas or as flower-derived ingredient.