

## Quality Elderflower Harvesting & Drying 2018

Harvest should start as soon as dew is TOTALLY off the flowers. The flowers need to be completely dry at harvest. Growers need to staff sufficiently to only take a few hours or less. A harvest rate of 30# fresh flowers/man-hour under ideal, first pass, harvest the whole plant conditions is possible. Flowers should not be overly compressed in harvest bins and should be set out to dry within one hour of harvest. Do not let the fresh flowers start to compost in the harvest containers or during transport!

A grower will want to use a cabinet style drier with racks. Racks will probably be made out of wooden frames with fiberglass mosquito netting and galvanized chicken wire or hardware netting for support. If using solar heating, you need a standard dehumidifier or electric heater for nights / backup. 20 sf. of drying rack can accommodate about 5# of fresh flowers. For a small-scale grower, a small room with 100 sf. of drying space and a 45-pint dehumidifier and a small fan should suffice.

The basics of good drying: Drying elderflowers requires special care because they are white, pretty and delicate. Keep heat below a certain temperature (maybe 105°F for elderflowers?). Flowers must be totally dry when harvested. Continuous drying is key. Once the flowers are mostly dry, they should not be permitted to reabsorb moisture from a new addition of wet material into the drier or on a cool wet night as this could cause yellowing / browning. Under ideal conditions flowers will dry in 24 to 36 hours.

[Tony DiMaggio gets a dry down rate of 1:6.5 when using his solar dryer packed with fresh flowers on minimal stem. Elderflowers should be dried alone since they produce lots of pollen, and we want the pollen as part of the product. Tony: "In Oregon a lot of the flower drying (calendula, chamomile) is done in blacked out greenhouses. I don't think that this is a good solution due to loss of quality."]

Once flowers are dry they can be gently rubbed over ¼ inch galvanized hardware fabric to remove the stems. Take care to keep pollen with the plant. Store dried, destemmed flowers in airtight plastic bags in a dry, dark, cool place. If the flowers are not dry, they will mold. Label every bag with a separate lot number that identifies product and the 6-digit date it came off of the dryer: i.e. EDF083118.

Found reference:

### **University of VT guide on growing elderberry found on the MEC website. p. 48**

"Flowers can be removed from the stems prior to drying by rubbing them over a screen. Alternatively, the Le Sureau du Canada publication recommends drying flowers on the stems individually in paper bags at 80.6°F for 48 hours. At higher temperatures, the flowers may brown or caramelize which can negatively affect their flavor, appearance and medicinal properties. The conversion ratio of fresh elderflower on-stem to destemmed, dried elderflower is 20:1. Therefore, 20 pounds of florets on-stem should yield one pound of dried florets (Quebec, 2010; (Carpenter and Carpenter, 2015)."