

Elder

Sambucus nigra

Plants · Deciduous shrub · in flower Jun, berries Aug-Sep



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A fast-growing, short-lived deciduous shrub with corky furrowed bark, pinnate leaves and broad flat heads of creamy, heavily scented flowers in June, followed by drooping bunches of small purple-black berries. Elder springs up readily on disturbed and nutrient-rich ground — old walls, farmyards, rabbit warrens, waste ground — throughout the Dumfries area.

BEHAVIOUR

It thrives where nitrogen is high, which is why it appears around badger setts, rabbit warrens and old middens, and it is often the first woody plant on neglected ground. The berries are taken heavily by blackcaps, starlings and thrushes in late summer. Both flowers and berries have long been used for cordial and wine, and the tree carries a great deal of protective folklore.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Moschatel family (Adoxaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 10 m
STATUS	Native; common on disturbed, nutrient-rich ground

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