ELDER, MEXICAN

Sambucus mexicana

Family: Caprifoliaceae

Names: Flor Sauco, blue elderberry, tapiro, sauco

Description: Mexican elderberry is a deciduous shrub reaching 15 feet with butter yellow flowers in Apr.-Aug.. This elderberry is native to canyons, valleys west of Sierra Nevada form Oregon to Baja and east to West Texas. It likes full sun to part shade, garden water. It will take extreme drought after it gets its roots out. Its berries are bluish-black. Pruning keeps the tree attractive.

Cultivation: Tolerates most soils, including chalk, but prefers a moist loamy soil. Grows well in heavy clay soils. Tolerates some shade but is best in a sunny position. Tolerates atmospheric pollution and coastal situations. Plants in this genus are notably resistant to honey fungus. Seed is best sown as soon as it is ripe in the autumn in a cold frame, when it should germinate in early spring. Stored seed can be sown in the spring in a cold frame but will probably germinate better if it is given 2 months warm followed by 2 months cold stratification first. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle. If good growth is made, the young plants can be placed in their permanent positions during the early summer. Otherwise, either put them in a sheltered nursery bed, or keep them in their pots in a sheltered position and plant them out in spring of the following year. Cuttings of half-ripe wood, 7 - 10cm with a heel, July/August in a frame. Cuttings of mature wood of the current season's growth 15 - 20cm with a heel, late autumn in a frame or a sheltered outdoor bed.

Constituents: Flowers: Flavonoids (up to 3% rutin), Phenolic acids, Triterpenes, Sterols, Volatile oil (up to 0.2%), Mucilage, Tannins; Leaves: Cyanogenic glycosides; Berries: Flavonoids, Anthocyanins, Vitamins A and C

Properties: Febrifuge; Laxative; Stomachic.

Medicinal Uses: An infusion of the blossoms has been used in the treatment of upset stomachs, fevers, sore throats, colds and flu. A decoction of the roots has been used in the treatment of constipation. A widely used treatment for fever, combined with equal parts of Brook Mint or Pennyroyal as a tea. A tea of the flowers and/or dried berries acts as a simple diuretic to treat water retention. As a face wash for acne and pimples, use a tea of the flowers. Take as a tea up to 3 times a day.

Dosage: Infusion: 1oz of flowers per pint of boiling water poured over the herb. Let steep for at least 5 to 10 minutes then strain. Drink 3 cups per day to promote the removal of waste products from the body. Decoction: 1oz of berries per pint of boiling water for 15 to 20

minutes. Take 100ml 3 times per day for rheumatic aches.

Culinary Uses: The fruit is edible, very tart, and usually has little sweetness, but often satisfyingly juicy. They make great jelly, fair in pie and wine. The fruit is usually dried before being used since this reduces a somewhat rank taste.

Other Uses: A purple to black dye is obtained from the fruits. An orange to yellow dye is obtained from the stems.

References:

Los Remedios, Michael Moore, Red Crane Books, 1990; ISBN: 1-878610-06-6
Plants for a Future Database

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