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Sambucus

Adoxaceae
[*Caprifoliaceae*]

Sambucus is a Latin name for ‘elder’.

Pliny (23-79), the Roman natural historian, records that the shepherds made flutes and trumpets from elder sticks (removal of the pith leaves a hollow pipe). The Greeks called such a wind instrument a *sambuke* from which the botanical name is derived. Even just before the 2nd World War Italian peasants made a simple pipe from the elder’s branches which they called a *sampogna*. Until recent years such a pipe was also the traditional country ‘pop-gun’ for little boys; a custom that Pliny’s writings show goes back for several thousand years.