

Sambucus racemosa

[Synonyms : *Sambucus pubens*, *Sambucus racemosa* var. *laciniata*, *Sambucus sieboldiana*]

RED-BERRIED ELDER is a deciduous shrub. Native to western Asia and to southern and central Europe, it has small fragrant, yellowish-green or yellowish-white flowers.

It is also known as Alpine elder, *Baza červená* (Slovak), *Berg-Holunder* (German), *Bez červený* (Czech), *Bez hroznatý* (Czech), *Druvfläder* (Swedish), *Druvhyll* (Swedish), Elderberry, European red elder, Hart's elder, *Holunder* (German), Mountain elder, Red elder, Red elderberry, *Roter Holunder* (German), *Sambuko ruĝa* (Esperanto), Scarlet elder, Scarlet elderberry, *Sureau rameaux* (French), *Terttuselja* (Finnish), and *Trauben-Holunder* (German).

The flowers turn brownish as they dry.

Oil can be extracted from the seeds.

Warning – the seeds are said to be poisonous.

Racemosa is derived from Latin *racemus* (cluster) meaning 'with stalked flowers up the stem'.

As with other species the shrub's stems furnished children from some of the Salish North American Indian tribe and some of the Kwakiutl tribe with blowguns. The hollowed out stems were also used by the Bella Coola for the bowls of pipes for smoking.

The small shiny, bright scarlet berries provided food for many North American tribes including the Thompson, Gosiute, some of the Apache, the Nitinaht, some of the Okanagan-Colville, some of the Chippewa, the Quileute, Makah and Hesquiat tribes, and some of the Kwakiutl Indians and the Quileute, Makah, Bella Coola, and Kitasoo tribes all stored them in various ways for future use. Thompson Indians included the berries in a fish marinade, Hesquiat Indians used them to make preserves and jam, and the Bella Coola made them into wine.

This elder was not short of superstitious associations. Authorities note that Gitksan Indians included the bark with juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) roots in a preparation that was believed to be able to help anyone who had been subjected to evil influences.

North American Indian tribes new that red-berried elder could be poisonous but like the Wet'suwet'en Indians many still respected medicinal qualities. The Menominee are known to have administered a tea made from the boiled and steeped inner bark and rind as a last resort remedy for constipation, and the Potawatomi, some of the Chippewa, the Hesquiat, Gitksan, some of the Carrier, the Sikani, Nitinaht and the Bella Coola also used the shrub as a purgative. The Cherokee and Kwakiutl tribes used it to treat some female ailments, and the Cherokee also prescribed it for easing fevers and colds. Both the Hesquiat and Bella Coola tribes used it for stomach upsets, and they and the Malecite, Menominee, Potawatomi, Micmac, Gitksan, Nitinaht, some of the Chippewa and the Kwakiutl Indian tribe all used it to cause vomiting. For Thompson Indians the shrub provided a remedy for some liver disorders, and they, some of the Okanagan-Colville tribe and the Hesquiat Indians used it to treat rheumatism. The Thompson tribe also applied it to various skin ailments, Pomo Indians used it on wounds, and both the Thompson Indians and some of the Okanagan-Colville tribe turned to it for easing toothache.

The fruit are especially enjoyed by birds which will strip a bush bare.