



ELDERFARMS

DORMANT HARDWOOD-CUTTING CARE
& PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS

Black Elderberry is a very hardy plant and will grow almost anywhere, from Canada to the Mexican border. Elderberry plants like water, and can tolerate having their roots wet for a period of time. They are also drought tolerant, however, it is best to provide irrigation for maximum yields and plant health.

In fall or early spring, get soil samples and prepare your fields accordingly. Pre-plant soil testing is recommended to evaluate the soil pH and nutrient levels. Adjust pH level to 5.5-6.5, phosphorus level to 50 pounds/acre, and potassium level to 200-300 pounds/acre. Although elderberries tolerate cold temperatures following bud break, it is best to select sites that are elevated relative to surrounding land to reduce the risk of damage from spring frost, which allows air drainage. Elderberry requires full sun for optimum protection. Control problem perennial weeds such as Bermuda and Johnson grass before planting. Elderberry is a freestanding bush, and we keep our fields mowed, and planted with a cover crop to minimize weeds.



Create rows that are 12-14 feet apart. This allows equipment to move between rows and give plants full sun. Lanes between rows are grass and will need mowing. Dormant cuttings or rooted cuttings should be set anywhere from 2 - 4 feet apart depending on how dense you want your rows. 2' plant spacing with 14' row spacing will yield about 1,800 plants per acre, while 4' plant spacing on 14' row spacing will yield about 900 plants per acre. The plants will grow together once mature in about three years and 2' spacing can crowd plants, but may be more beneficial for smaller acreages looking to maximize yield.



Planting sticks while dormant is the best approach. When the soil has thawed and days begin to warm, plant the sticks directly into the prepared location. Dormant hardwood cuttings have an angle cut on the bottom end. Above the angle is a bud set. Put this bud set about 2 inches under the soil surface.

The bottom buds will make roots and top buds will make leaves. This will happen slowly. Sometimes later in the year the top leaves will fall off if the plant becomes stressed. This means new shoots are preparing to emerge from under the soil surface. Do not prune your starts until the second winter. When ready to prune, wait until all leaves have fallen off the plant into December. Prune all canes about 6" above the ground to leave node sets above ground. This will help the plant know where to shoot new shoots back up and helps prevent canes popping up sporadically in between rows.



Elderberries require a great deal of water, so make sure your chosen site has access to water. Mulch (we suggest hay or wood chips) is suggested for weed control and to help retain moisture levels. New elderberry plantings need good weed control, as they do not compete well. Options include planting through a biodegradable plastic mulch, or a substance such as straw or untreated wood chips. Elderberries love nutrients, so plan to fertilize liberally with an organic fertilizer. We prefer organic chicken litter.

Some growers will want to start sticks indoors. Begin with a strong soil mixture. Insert dormant cuttings into soil as described above and place the pot in a sunny and cool location. If the location is too warm, the cuttings will grow leaves before it grows roots causing weakness. Do not let the soil get dry.

If watching the rooting process appeals to you, the cutting may be placed in a jar of water. Leaves will often swell from top node sites first, followed by roots shortly after. Gently transfer rooted cuttings from water to soil. Rooted cuttings should be planted slightly below the collar and the soil tamped. They should be grown in the greenhouse for 10-12 weeks for maximum success. New plantings need .5" to 1" of water per week. Elderberry plants are shallow rooted, thus, moisture and nutrients are received into the top few inches of the soil. Once your plants are established and produced ideally they will need 1 inch of water weekly during the growing season, and slightly more in drought conditions and fruit ripening.

Use 10-10-10 at an application rate of 4 ounces per age of the plant. Do not exceed one pound per plant. Organic compost should be applied every year to keep soil life optimized. Dehydrated chicken manure should be applied in late fall or early spring.

Apply fertilizer in the early spring when leaves start budding on trees. In late May to early June, apply additional nitrogen, up to one pound of ammonium nitrate per plant.



Fruiting usually begins on the end of one and two year canes. Selective pruning results in a longer period of harvest and more clusters.

Berries begin to appear after the plant flowers. Berries will ripen from green to red to black with a hint of purple. They ripen over a period of 6-8 weeks and can range in individual size from 3/16 to 1/4 inch in diameter. The entire cyme/cluster is cut off at harvest once dark purple/black. Buehler Organics follows FDA guidelines for harvesting, washing, and storing elderberries for use in their product line. If you are interested in a buy back these guidelines will need to be implemented.

Cuttings/Varieties Offered: Bob Gordon, Ranch, Wyldewood, York, Pocahontas

For more information or to order your cuttings please contact:

David Buehler
Buehler Organics, LLC 15821 Lawrence 1125 Mount Vernon, MO 65712
buehlerorganic@gmail.com 417-576-3277

Salesman
Kyler Brown 417-522-4800