

Legend: Hyper-links to Glossary or other plant confused with target plant. BEWARE – Warning exists

Elder - *Sambucus nigra*

Other Names that it goes by ...

Also known as the Boortree, Boontree, Borewood, Battery, Dog tree, Ellern and the Fairy tree.

Plant Description (aka Taxonomy)

Member of the Honeysuckle family (*Caprifoliaceae*). A **dichot.**. A **deciduous** woody **shrub** or small tree growing up to 10m tall.

Ecological Story (Habitat)

Found in Woodlands, hedgerows and scrubby waste ground. Likes fertile soils and will quickly colonise disturbed ground. Often alongside Nettles which also like nutrient rich ground. Elder plays host to the **parasitic** Judas ear fungus (*Auricularia auricula-judae*) and

Commented [PB1]: Link to fungus

Flowering Time

June through July.

Fruiting time

August through September

Best time to see it and use it

Depends on what you want to do with it?

Springtime for collecting flowers to make Elderflower Cordial, Fritters etc.. For making playful items such as Whistles, Pea shooters, Pencils etc. again spring when the sap makes it easy to remove the bark.

Late Summer into early Autumn for collecting berry fruits for making wines ...

How to Identify it

Flower Structure: Creamy white flat-topped **umbel** (10-20cm across) resembling an open umbrella.

Commented [PB2]: Link to flower picture

Leaf: Pinnate toothed leaves in opposite pairs.

Stem (trunk, branch if relevant). Look out for the deeply-furrowed and corky like bark and young straight shutes with dimpled striation markings. The Judas ear fungus can be seen all year round either dried and shrivelled in dry weather or full-blown jellied after rainfall.

Commented [PB3]: Link to fungus

The key recognition features:

Spring/Summer: The leaves are very distinctive its foul diesel like smell is unmistakable with anything else, though some find it pleasant – the decision is yours! The bark of the bigger branches are deeply-furrowed and corky-like while the new shutes tend to be very straight, upright with dimpled striation markings (**lenticels**) along its length. If you cut into one of these young shutes - you will see at its centre a soft spongy pith which can be gouged out easily. Late summer early autumn the flowers become black edible berries in an umbel.

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Commented [PB5]: Insert link to picture

Commented [PB6]: Link to picture

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Late Autumn - Winter: all of above excepting leaves and flowers. Early autumn leaf buds always look crimson red and tattered with emerging leaves. There is often a green algae on the bark which shows up in winter.

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Commented [PB9]: Link to picture

Distribution

Found almost everywhere in the British Isles (check EU distribution) except a few small places. See BSBI Map <https://bsbi.org/maps?taxonid=2cd4p9h.fyz>

National Status

Very common.

Cultural Links (Folklore, Myths, Legends, uses etc..) – see other springboards

Edible:

Magic Status: A highly magical powerful plant. If burned you will see the Devil or if grown by your house will keep the Devil away. It can

The Impersonators

Similar plants confused with it include: Wayfaring tree (*Viburnum lantana*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) which both have white or cream flowers in an umbel like shape. Like the rowan it has fewer opposite paired pinnate toothed leaves which are not as neatly cut and presented on their leaf stems.

When not in Flower the leaves, the tree bark and its smell are key.

Commented [PB10]: Include link to leaf photographs of rowan, wayfaring and elder

Its food chain link


Danger Level Rating – Low

The flowers and berries are edible but the leaves and twigs contain toxic levels of cyanogenic glycosides. The leaves and twigs are fine to handle and play with only but as with all plants you must always wash your hands afterwards and before eating.

Elder in pictures

Commented [PB11]: Include scale in cm's.

Early Spring:

Full plant in habitat situ	Short Film Clip – getting up close	
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Commented [PB12]: Short Film Clip – getting up close

Stem, Branch or Trunk



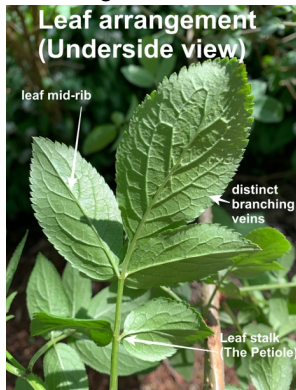
Stem, Branch or Trunk



Leaf arrangement 1



Leaf arrangement 2

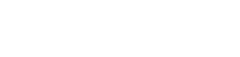
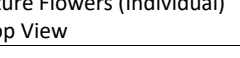
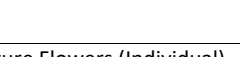
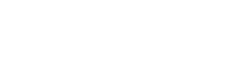
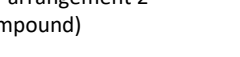
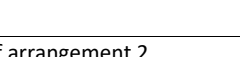
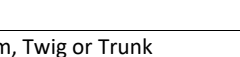
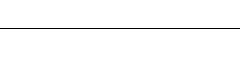
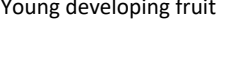
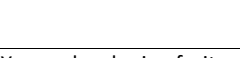
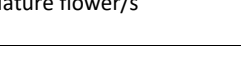
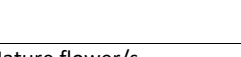
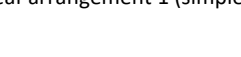
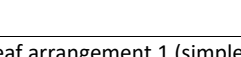
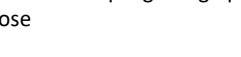
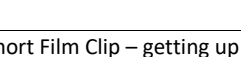
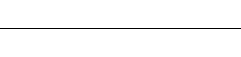
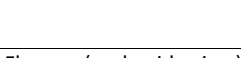
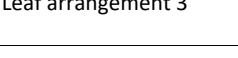
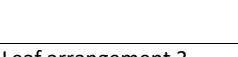
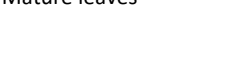
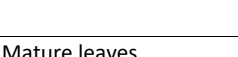
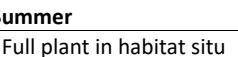
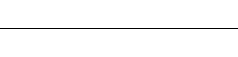
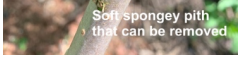
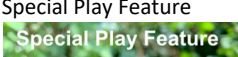


Young emerging leaves



Young emerging leaves





Special Play Feature



Flowers (underside view)



Young developing fruit

Summer

Full plant in habitat situ	Short Film Clip – getting up close	Stem, Twig or Trunk
Mature leaves	Leaf arrangement 1 (simple)	Leaf arrangement 2 (Compound)
Leaf arrangement 3	Mature flower/s	Mature Flowers (Individual) – Top View


Mature Flowers (Group of) – Top View	Mature Flowers (underside view)	Maturing Fruit

Autumn

Full plant in habitat situ	Short Film Clip – getting up close	Stem, Twig or Trunk
Dying leaves	Mature Fruit	Mature Fruit (up close)
Special play feature	Special play feature	Special play feature

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Any known Parasites (or other) linked to the Plant

<p>Judas Ear Fungus</p> 		
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Winter Features that help you identify it in Winter


Leaf Buds	Leaf Scars	Bud Scar
Twig	Single Bud	Many Buds

Bud Scale Scar	Bud Arrangements	Full plant

The Impersonators – similar Plants that might confuse you and the features that separate them

Full Plant – Wayfaring Tree	Key Feature 1	Key feature 2
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Commented [PB13]: This will vary from plant to plant so focus on the key diagnostics that separate them is all that is needed.

Full Plant – Rowan	Key feature 1	Key feature 2
		

Habitats: Typical places where you will be likely to find your plant growing.

Woodland	Grassland	Roadside Verge
Farmland	Freshwater	Heathland moorland
Towns and Gardens	Hedgerow	Coastal
Scrubby waste ground		