



## Elder - *sambucus nigra*



The best times to spot Elder are in the early summer when it is in flower or in the autumn when it bears the characteristic clusters of black berries.

Elder is widespread throughout Selsdon Wood. It is a low growing tree or bush mostly found in the field boundaries and alongside the pathways. Notable specimens are at the Courtwood Lane entrance, beside the Jubilee Plantation (right 7/5/12) and by the paths that cut through the woodland strip from Field 1 to Field 2.



The dusky green compound leaf (above left 10/5/12) is divided into 5, 7 or 9 oval leaflets with toothed edges. The leaf stem and young twigs are often green (above right 7/5/12) while the older stems and trunk are coated with rough corky bark of a characteristic pitted appearance (below left 19/5/12).



The flower buds are purple (above centre 20/5/12) and open to small white flowers with 5 petals, grouped into flat-topped clusters known as cymes. They are strongly scented.

In the autumn the flowers turn to clusters of purply black berries on red stems (right 14/9/03). These are mildly poisonous if eaten raw.

Both flowers and berries are used for wine making - the flowers producing a scented white wine, cordial or champagne and the berries a rich red wine. The flowers can also be dipped in batter and fried as fritters.

The branches are light and filled with pith and traditionally children would hollow them out and use them for pea-shooters.



Take a spring or autumn walk and spot the white flowers or purple berries.  
Take some home to make wine or cordial.

# Friends of Selsdon Wood

Working to improve our wood



Elder is widespread throughout Selsdon Wood.  
The map shows a few notable specimens.



