

Museums Worcestershire Make-athon Challenges

Herbarium: Elder

Learn more about the Elder tree and have a go at making Elderflower cordial.



The Elder is an ancient plant grows in roadside hedgerows, woods and gardens. At this time of year, the tree is covered in tiny white flowers that hang in sprays, developing into deep purple berries that ripen in September - the thrushes and starlings feast on them!

Discover:

1. The Elder is a wonderful habitat for nesting birds and insects. They choose to live in the hollows of the older trunk wood.
2. The young branches are very brittle and filled with a creamy white pith material. This can be hollowed-out to make bug houses. The hollowed branches can also make great musical instruments!
3. The Elder is a fast-growing tree with plenty of interest all year round. It is not fussy - growing happily in a variety of soils - it can even be found growing in the gaps between paving slabs and walls!
4. There are many old customs and folklores connected to the Elder. It was believed that if you allowed the tree to grow outside your door, your family would be protected from evil spirits.
5. If you wish to see fairies, stand under the Elder on Midsummer's Eve - check the date in your diary!

Explore:

On a walk see if you can spot an Elder - look for the sprays of tiny white flowers. They will smell fragrant, musky and sweet!

To see a preserved Elder specimen in our Herbarium collection, visit

https://www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk/avada_portfolio/herbarium/

Create:

Easy Elderflower Cordial

Late May to mid June is the time to forage and to collect the flower heads for this recipe. Remember: Always pick the flowers on a dry, sunny day. Make sure that you have permission and can confidently identify this plant before you start to pick!

You will need:

- 1 litre (2 pints) of elderflowers
- Lemons
- Lemon zest
- Granulated sugar
- Water
- Bottles with screw top lids or corks
- Muslin or tea towel
- Weighing scales
- Measuring jug
- Funnel

**Method:**

- Gather enough elderflower sprays to fill a 1 litre (2 pint measure) when lightly packed.
- Shake the flowers to make sure that there are no insects trapped in the sprays.
- Cover the elderflowers with water.
- Add the zest (from 2 lemons)
- Simmer for 30 minutes - topping the water up, to keep the liquid covering the flowers.
- Strain the liquid through the muslin or tea towel.
- Measure the amount of liquid.
- Add 350g (12oz) granulated sugar and the juice of half a lemon to each 500ml (1 pint) of liquid.
- Heat gently to dissolve the sugar.
- Bring to a gentle simmer and skim off any scum.
- Leave the liquid to cool.
- Pour the liquid through a funnel into clean, sterilised bottles (up to 1cm below the top of the bottle)
- Seal bottles
- Store in the fridge for up to several weeks - dilute (to taste) with cold water.

Recipe adapted from the Woodland Trust Charity.

To find more exciting make-athon ideas visit

www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk/collections/activities/