



# dogs naturally

July - August 2016

Special Allergy Issue

ARE WE LOSING OUR  
**MINDS?**

NATURAL TREATMENT OF  
**ALLERGIC REACTIONS**

**DETOXING**  
YOUR DOG'S WORLD

**WHY THE AVMA**  
DOESN'T REPRESENT ME

**COOLING FOOD**  
**THERAPY**

**THE ITCH**  
**FIX**

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## Elderberry and Elderflower

Botanical Name: *Sambucus canadensis*

Family: Caprifoliaceae [Honeysuckle]

Part Used: Flowers, berries

The elder is a small tree that grows in cooler climates and produces white flower clusters in mid to late summer that emerge as berry clusters in early fall. Both the flower and the berry have medicinal properties, but if you use all the flowers, you won't get any berries. I usually pick about a third of my elderflowers and leave the rest until early fall when I happily harvest the dark, antioxidant-rich elderberries.

Only blue-black elderberries are good for eating or medicine, but they must be cooked as the raw berries contain a cyanide-like chemical. Green, unripe, or bright red elderberries (*Sambucus ebulus*) are bitter and potentially toxic, even when cooked.

Elderberry properties are: cool and dry, antiviral, relaxing diaphoretic, immune-modulatory, antioxidant, relaxing nerve, expectorant, emollient, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, anticancer.

Elderberry contains 87 percent vitamin C. This is great for joint health, to prevent dysplasia, to nourish and strengthen connective tissue, ligaments and tendons and to prevent infections. Adding some elderberry tea or extract to your dog's food can help balance the immune and musculoskeletal

systems. Elderberries contain potassium and vitamins B1, B2 and B6; they're high in flavonoids, making them antioxidant-rich and able to prevent cell damage.

For dogs elderberry can detoxify, diminish coughs, lower fever, soothe and heal skin rashes or burns, soften rough patches of skin and moisturize dry skin. Both the berries and the flowers can reduce swelling in mucous membranes, relieve digestive issues and act as a diuretic.

Elderflower has anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antiseptic and antibacterial properties. It can be distilled into a hydrosol and used as an external antiseptic or poultice to treat wounds, sunburned noses, sore muscles, or skin that's healing from mange or dermatitis; as an eye wash for any eye inflammation or irritation; as an oral rinse that you can apply to the gums with a squeeze bottle.

### Cautions

Elderflower reduces blood sugar levels, so be careful using it in a pet who's on insulin or diabetes drugs already. Check with your veterinarian before use.

Elderberry should not be used in pregnant or lactating animals. 🍷

### MAKING AN ELDERFLOWER HYDROSOL

You'll need a common enameled canning pot with lid, a steamer basket with the center post removed, a glass bowl and a bag of ice. Make sure all your equipment is clean.

Place 3 quarts of filtered water in the pot with 10 oz of elderflower and let it macerate a few hours.

Place the open veggie steamer basket in the center of the pot.

Place the glass receiver bowl on the center of the steamer. The bowl should be above the water level.

As soon as the water begins to simmer, turn the lid upside down, and lay a thick plastic bag full of ice on top.

Lower the heat, keeping it just high enough to maintain condensation of the liquid into the bowl.

The steam contains the essential oils of the plant and will drip down into the bowl.

Let the water and herbs distill for a few hours or until you have enough hydrosol. Refill the ice bag as necessary.

Once the hydrosol is finished, let it cool. Then pour it through a funnel lined with a wetted paper filter into a jar or bottle that has a lid. Cap the jar and refrigerate up to 18 months.



*Joyce Belcher is an herbalist and formulator of pet supplements and herbal medicinals for veterinarians and is the founder of Herbs for Life Inc. She lives in York, Maine with her husband, two dogs and two cats; they are all rescues. Visit Joyce at [petwellnessblends.com](http://petwellnessblends.com)*