California Phenology Project: species profile for Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra ssp. cerulea*)

CPP site(s) where this species is monitored: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Photo credit: flit (Flickr)

What does this species look like?

This deciduous shrub forms thickets with many branches and can have multiple trunks. It grows up to 8 meters tall. The leaves are subdivided into 5 to 9 leaflets with toothed edges. The small yellowish-white flowers are found in dense clusters. They are bisexual, having both male and female parts within each flower. The fruits are a dark blue berry displayed in clusters.

*When monitoring this species, use the USA-NPN **deciduous trees and shrubs** datasheet.*

Species facts!

- The CPP four letter species code for this species is **SANI.**
- The fruit is used to make wine, jellies, candy, pies, and sauces.
- Its wood is used to make combs, spindles, mathematical instruments, blowguns, flutes, and whistles.
- The bark is used to make a dye, and its leaves are used as an insecticide and medicinally.
- Several parts of the plant, including its unripe fruit, contain a poisonous alkaloid and cyanogenic glycoside.

Photo credit: James Gaither (Flickr)

Photo credit: KQED Quest (Flickr)

Where is this species found?

- Found in openings in moist forest habitat and moist areas within drier, open habitats
- Associated with riparian plant communities
- Grows best on loam or sandy loam soils.
- Most common at low to mid elevations.

For more information about phenology and the California Phenology Project (CPP), please visit the CPP website (www.usanpn.org/cpp) and the USA-NPN website (www.usanpn.org)

Version 3, May 2016

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Breaking leaf buds

Leaves

Increasing leaf size

Colored leaves

Flowers or flower buds

*When monitoring **flower or flower bud abundance** for this species, count each inflorescence as a single flowering structure! For example, if there are two inflorescences with many flowers or buds each, then abundance should be recorded as <3.*

Open flowers

*Can you see stigmas and anthers? **Proportion of open flowers** should be recorded at the scale of individual flowers, not inflorescences (i.e. estimate the proportion of individual flowers that are open)!*

***Note**: flower phenophases are nested; if you record **Y** for "open flowers" you should also record **Y** to "flowers or flower buds"*

Fruits

The fruit is berry-like and changes from green to dark purple to black.

Ripe fruits

The fruit is ripe when it is dark purple to black

***Note**: fruit phenophases are nested; if you record **Y** for "ripe fruits" you should also record **Y** to "fruits"*

*Phenophases not pictured: **Falling leaves, Recent fruit or seed drop***