Blue Elderberry, Sambucus caerulea

Deciduous tree or large shrub,15-30 ft tall found at forest-edge location. (1)

(1)

Range
Blue Elderberry if found from British Columbia south to California. (2)

Climate, elevation
Blue elderberry is most common from sea level to moderate elevations in the mountains. (3) Blue elderberry is more common on warmer sites than red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)(4) but can withstand temperatures to -38F. (9)

Local occurrence (where, how common)
It is the most common elderberry in eastern Oregon and Washington and is generally found along fence rows or in stream valleys. (3)

Habitat preferences
Prefers sunny, forest-edge location and moist soils. Blue elderberry is common along stream banks, river banks, and open places in riparian areas lower than < 3000 m. (4)

Plant strategy type/successional stage (stress-tolerator, competitor, weedy/colonizer, seral, late successional)
Early seral. (3)

Associated species
Some common associates are serviceberry (Amelanchier spp.), chokecherry (Prunus virginiana), rose (Rosa spp.), gooseberries (Ribes spp.), big sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata), bromegrass (Bromus spp.), and wheatgrass (Agropyron spp.) (3)

May be collected as: (seed, layered, divisions, etc.)
Seed, Vegetative cuttings (6)

Collection restrictions or guidelines
Collect fruit when it ripens between August and September. Remove pulp by running the fruit through a macerator or simply crush the fruit and dry. (6)

Seed germination (needs dormancy breaking?)
Seeds can be planted in the fall after collection or stored at 41F. If seeds are stored then warm stratification (70F – 85F) is required for 60-90 days followed by 90-100 days of cold stratification (41F) before sowing in the spring. (4, )

Seed life (can be stored, short shelf-life, long shelf-life)
Seeds can be stored for up to 16 years at 41F. (3)

Recommended seed storage conditions
41F. (6)

Propagation recommendations (plant seeds, vegetative parts, cuttings, etc.)
Blue elderberry is most often propagated by seed although it can be propagated from cuttings. Blue elderberry, however tend to have a lower survival rate from cuttings than seeds. (4,6)

Soil or medium requirements (inoculum necessary?)
Seeds are sown close to the surface. A thin layer of sawdust mulch can then be used to cover the seeds. (6) . Inoculation with mycorrhizal fungi may enable seedlings to better utilize limited supplies of both water and nutrients. (4)

Installation form (form, potential for successful outcomes, cost)
Seedlings are field planted in the fall or spring when they are 6 to 8 months old. (4,7)
Blue elderberry must be planted into well-drained soil or will likely suffer high mortality. (8)

Recommended planting density
Minimum planting density per acre: 1746
Maximum planting density per acre: 3450 (9)

Care requirements after installed (water weekly, water once etc.)
If planted in the fall, irrigation may not be necessary in moist sites. In drier sites or with spring planting, irrigation will be required for seedling establishment. (4)

Normal rate of growth or spread; lifespan
Growth rate is Moderate (8) to Rapid (9) reaching a height of 15-30ft. It may grow 75% of its full height within the first year. Lifespan is moderate (9)

Sources cited

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(3) USDA Forest Service, Fire Effects Information System <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/samnigc/all.html>
(4) NRCS Plant's Data base: <http://plants.usda.gov/cgi_bin/topics.cgi?earl=fact_sheet.cgi>
(5) NRCS Plant's Data base: <http://plants.usda.gov/cgi_bin/topics.cgi?earl=plant_profile.cgi&symbol=SANIC5>
(6) Rose, Robin. Propagation of Pacific Northwest Native Plants. 1998. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, OR, 97331.
(7) USDA Forest Service, National Tree Seed Laboratory <http://ntsl.fs.fed.us/wpsm/Sambucus.pdf#search='Sambucus%20cerulea%20climate%20temperature'>
(8) Sound Native Plants: <http://www.soundnativeplants.com/catalogtrees.htm#SASI>
(9) NRCS Plant's Data base: <http://plants.usda.gov/cgi_bin/plant_attribute.cgi?symbol=SANIC5>

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