

# Elder

## About elder

Mature elder trees can grow up to 15m and live around 60 years. It generally has a short trunk and characteristic light coloured, corky furrowed bark. This is one of the favourite trees of foragers – its berries and flowers have many uses. The flowers can be made into tea, wine or cordial or made into fritters and the berries, rich in vitamin C, can be used in baking, preserves and wine.

Smaller stems have a pithy centre that can be easily removed and used in crafts, e.g. making beads, whilst older wood can be used for whittling and carving. Elder also yields dyes – berries make blue and purple, leaves yellow and green and the bark grey and black.

The flowers provide nectar for a variety of insects and the leaves feed caterpillars of a range of moths, including swallowtail and buff ermine. Small mammals, such as voles and dormice, eat the berries and flowers and birds, like blackbirds, particularly like the berries.





## Identifying elder

**#1 Location** – elder can be found in many places, including woodlands, scrubby areas, hedgerows and brownfield sites.



Buds

**#2 Buds and fruits** – buds develop in opposite pairs. They are actually young leaves and are described as looking ‘untidy’. Dark berries appear in autumn and hang in bunches.

**#3 Bark** – the bark of elder is very distinctive, being furrowed and ‘corky’. It’s often covered in mosses and liverworts.

### Where to spot elder trees in Torfaen:

Southfields playing fields, Cwmbran, adjacent to river;  
Churchwood (lane off Park Road, Pontypool)



Bark