

## Elderberry — Tuuciik

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**TUUCIIQUTAT ALAGNANGQ'RTAARTUT. – THE ELDERBERRY BUSHES ALWAYS HAVE BERRIES.**

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Photo: Alexandra (Sacha) Smith standing in front of a Pacific Red Elder bush in fruit, ca. 1991. Photo by Priscilla Russell, KANA collection.

Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*) is a large shrub with toothed leaves and soft wood that grows up to twelve feet tall. This bush occurs throughout northern North America in both wooded and open areas. Around Kodiak, it is particularly fond of the rich organic soil that forms over archaeological sites. Red elderberry has small, strong-smelling, ivory-colored flowers that produce clusters of small, red berries. Warning! The seeds, leaves, twigs, and roots of this plant are poisonous and can cause diarrhea and vomiting. Only the fleshy part of the berries and the blossoms are edible.

Alutiiq people use red elderberry for medicinal purposes. A tea made from the plant's flowers was once used to induce sweating in cases of high fever, pneumonia, chills, flu, tuberculosis, and other chronic diseases, and a poultice made from the inner and outer bark could relieve back problems. The leaves can be used to make a yellow dye and the berries a purplish red dye, and the flowers can be used to make wine.