

Western Washington Plants for Birds

Red Elderberry

Sambucus racemosa



Photo by Mick Thompson, Eastside Audubon Society

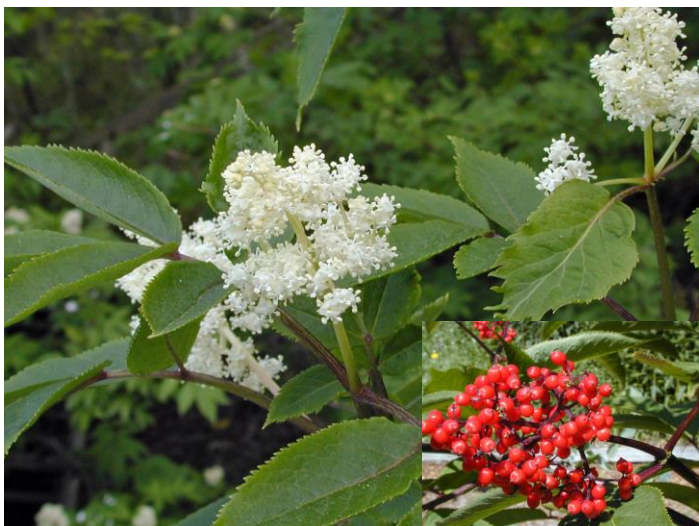
Red-breasted Sapsucker

(Sphyrapicus ruber)

Red-breasted sapsuckers are only found along the Pacific Coast. These birds primarily live in coniferous forests, but can be found in deciduous forests and even orchards.

They eat sap, insects, and fruit. They obtain the sap by drilling a series of shallow holes in the tree bark.

Several species of hummingbirds make use of these feeding holes and come to rely on them. The Rufous hummingbird is closely associated with the Red-breasted sapsucker. These hummingbirds nest near sap wells and may follow the woodpecker around during the day, feeding at the wells the sapsucker keeps flowing.



Photos by Donna Franklin, Washington Native Plant Society

Red Elderberry

This is a tree-like shrub that grows to 20 feet tall. It produces fragrant, pale, cone-shaped flowers at the ends of stem branches, followed by bright red or purple fruit clusters.

Although the berries are loved by birds and many mammals, they are mildly toxic to humans, if not cooked. Thrushes, grouse, robins, pigeons, sparrows, warblers, and sapsuckers are among the birds that eat the berries. Hummingbirds and butterflies use nectar from the flowers.

Red elderberry grows in forests, fields, and areas with consistently moist soil. It is happy in the sun or partial shade, and is one of the first plants to leaf out in the spring. Because of its dense root system and love of moisture, this fast-growing, but short-lived, plant can be used along river banks for soil stabilization and erosion control.

Cavity nesting bees will use its pithy, broken branches as nest sites.



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