



Sambucus canadensis 'Aurea' 'Aurea' American Elder¹

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INTRODUCTION

A fast-growing deciduous shrub, American Elder suckers quite easily and is often seen as a broad, spreading, multistemmed plant with bright green, pinnately compound, 12 to 14-inch-long yellow leaves arranged along the arching branches (Fig. 1). But it can be effectively pruned into a nice, small, single or multi-stemmed tree but needs regular pruning to remove suckers growing from the base of the plant. In early summer (northern part of its range) or sporadically all year long (in USDA hardiness zone 9), American Elder is literally smothered with 6 to 10-inch-wide clusters of yellowish-white blooms. These are followed by a multitude of small, cherry red berries which are quite popular with birds, and can be used in pies, jellies, or fermented to make a wine.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Sambucus canadensis* 'Aurea'

Pronunciation: sam-BEW-kuss kan-uh-DEN-sis

Common name(s): 'Aurea' American Elder, 'Aurea' Common Elder

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; trainable as a standard; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

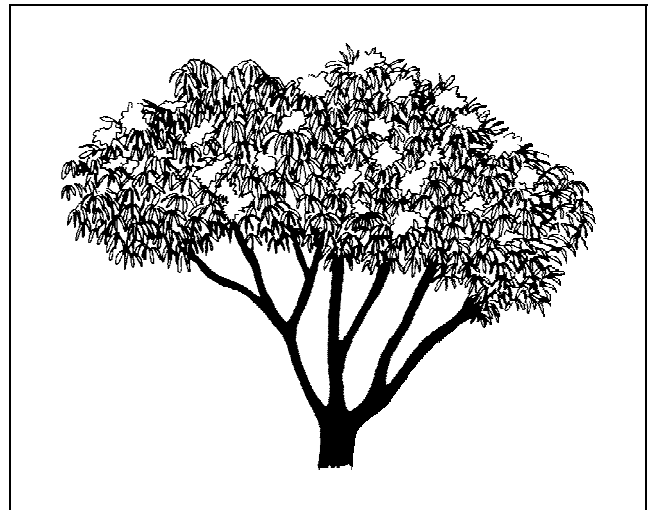


Figure 1. Mature 'Aurea' American Elder.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 8 to 13 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: serrate

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); lanceolate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: yellow

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; suited for human consumption; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple

trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: seeds itself into the landscape

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Ideal for use in naturalized landscapes where it will tolerate acid or alkaline soil and even some drought, American Elder performs best in full sun on moist to wet, fertile soils. Plant it in the shrub border or locate it next to the patio for a wonderful flower display. The plant is often overlooked by the trade perhaps because it is so commonly found in and along the woods, but it has a place in the garden, although its rather random habit would not make it popular in the commercial landscape. Requires pruning to create a neat small tree.

A few cultivars include: 'Acutiloba', leaflets very deeply divided, a nice fine-textured plant; 'Adams', fruits in dense, large clusters, excellent for baking. There are a variety of other very attractive species.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests

Borers, occasional leaf-chewing insects, may infest this tree.

Diseases

American Elder can be infected by cankers, leaf spots, powdery mildew.